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Children and Spirituality

In the past several months, increased attention has been paid to spirituality in general and to children's spirituality in particular. Christians have almost avoided the term because of its identification with post-modern perspectives and New-Age thinking. That avoidance, however, does the topic and its exploration a disservice. There is much to be learned from a thoughtful, biblical consideration of the topic, as this current issue of *Lutheran Education* demonstrates.

The articles that follow grew out of the *National Conference on Children and Spirituality: Christian Perspectives*, held on the campus of Concordia University, River Forest, IL in June 2003. That event attracted conferees from across the nation and from various parts of the world. Academics and practitioners spent three days considering the topic from a variety of theoretical and theological perspectives. Those perspectives included research, denominational practices, and models of ministry and academic points of view.

This writer participated in the two years of planning that brought the event to fruition. Planners representing a variety of academic and theological perspectives collaborated to provide a broad range of topics, research reports and applications for the consideration of those in attendance.

The papers selected for publication in this issue are the best of the best from that conference, and provide the readership of a journal in Lutheran educational pursuits both validation for their ministries and ideas that will challenge those ministries to grow to new levels of service.

Spirituality and Formation

This writer has spent the past decade attempting to operationalize the ideas of John Westerhoff as presented in many of his writings, beginning with "Will Our Children Have Faith?" First published in 1976 with a second edition in 2001, his perspectives on schooling Christians

have been most clearly presented in the book of the same name, co-edited with Stanley Hauerwas. In this book, Westerhoff posits the notion of faith formation as the foundation for later instruction and education in the faith.

Faith formation is, in this writer's opinion, most closely aligned with the concept of the spirituality of children from a Christian perspective. Marcia Bunge's article leads off the presentation s in this issue by providing a thoughtful and thorough historical overview of a theology of childhood. The relegation of children's faith issues to the practitioner, rather than to the theologian, seems to have caused this area of study to become an afterthought rather than being given serious consideration.

"All children develop concepts of God"

Children's Spirituality as Serious Study

As one looks at the status of children in the Church – whatever the denomination – one senses that, in most instances, children are marginalized to the point of not being considered as a serious topic of study.

Most of the theories of spirituality have been developed through studies involving adults, not children. While that is certainly easier from a research perspective, it is also shortsighted. A strong foundation of adult spirituality requires a strong foundation of spirituality in the child who will later become an adult.

Young children are spiritual beings, having been so created by God. That spirituality must be nurtured and fostered by adults who are sensitive to the child's understandings and perceptions. As children grow, their perceptions and understandings also grow, the depth of the latter - at least in part - being determined by the experiences they have that provide opportunities to explore and define a relationship with God.

Adult Responsibility

All children develop concepts of God. How accurate and how supportive those concepts are will be determined' – at least in part – by the experiences that point to God in the child's life. The intentionality of adults in relationship to those children, therefore, will have a strong impact on the concepts developed by the children themselves.

It is often surprising what children use as a basis for developing concepts and definitions of God. Often a part of that base is the child's

relationship with adult role models. Whether those role models point to God appears not to be as important as the strength of the relationship between child and adult. Such a relationship has the power to impact the child's spirituality, that is, the child's understanding of her/his relationship with God—for a lifetime. Only as such relationships receive serious attention and study will the emerging field of children's spirituality be furthered. —LEJ

Dr. Shirley Morgenthaler, Distinguished Professor of Education and Chair of the Teacher Education Department at Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois is a regular contributor to these pages and serves as the guest editor of this issue. She is well known among Lutheran educators as well as on the national stage for her expertise and advocacy of early childhood education in her teaching, writing, and conference presentations.

Retreiving a Bibilcally Informed View of Children: Implications for Religious Education, a Theology of Childhood, and Social Justice¹

Marcia J. Bunge

Certainly many people today are concerned about children in our midst and in our wider culture, and we all wonder: Are they being raised with love and affection? Are they receiving a good education? Are they safe in their homes and schools? Are they being exposed to good role models? Will they have a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives? Will they contribute in positive ways to society? In the church we also ask, will our children have faith? Will they live out that faith in service and compassion toward others?

Although we express these concerns, we find that many countries fail to meet even the basic needs of children, and children around the world suffer hunger, poverty, abuse and neglect, and depression. In the United States, for example, 16% of children live in poverty and approximately nine million children have no health insurance. Many children attend inadequate and dangerous schools, and solid pre-school programs, such as Head Start, lack full funding. Children are one of the last priorities in decisions about budget cuts on the state and federal level; road maintenance and military budgets take precedence over our children, even though politicians pledge to “leave no child behind” in terms of health care or education.

Although those in the church certainly care for children and have created beneficial programs for them, the church also often lacks a strong commitment to children and treats them as truly “the least of these.” We are witnessing this recently, for example, in the child sexual abuse cases within the Roman Catholic Church. We are shocked not only by the abuse of children but also by the ways in which financial concerns, careers of priests, and reputations of bishops or particular congregations have come before the safety and needs of children.

Yet the church exhibits a lack of commitment to children in other, subtler ways. Here are just four examples. First of all, many congregations offer weak religious education programs and fail to emphasize the importance

¹ Editors Note: Much of the material for this article was presented at a conference on “Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives,” Concordia University, River Forest (June 8-11, 2003). Sections also appear in Bunge (2003, pp. 11-19).

of parents in faith development. The curricula and lessons of many religious education programs are theologically weak and uninteresting to children, and qualified teachers are not recruited and retained. Furthermore, there is little coordinated effort between the church and the home in terms of a child's spiritual formation. Many parents don't even know what their children are learning in Sunday school, and parents are not given the sense that they are primarily responsible for the faith formation for children.

"In the United States, for example, 10% of children live in poverty and approximately nine million children have no health insurance."

As a result, we find, in the second place, that many parents within the church are neglecting to speak with their children about moral and spiritual matters

and to integrate practices into their everyday lives that nurture faith. This claim is confirmed by several recent studies of the Search Institute and Youth and Family Institute. For example, according to one study of 8,000 adolescents whose parents were members of congregations in eleven different Protestant and Catholic denominations, only 10% of these families discussed faith with any degree of regularity, and in 43% of the families, faith was never discussed.²

The experiences of students at church-related colleges, including those at Valparaiso University, reflect the findings of these studies. Many students here who were brought up in the church, attended services regularly, and are confessing Christians claim that they spoke rarely, if ever, with their parents about values or issues of faith. They also know little about the Bible and their own faith traditions, and they have difficulty speaking about relationships between their beliefs and their everyday lives and concerns.

Parents, too, admit that they struggle with both a "time bind" and "money bind," and their professional obligations often take priority over time with their children. Even when parents and children are at home together, the lure of TV or computer games erodes time for family conversations, and children under 18 in the United States now watch an average of 27 hours of TV a week (not including time spent playing video and computer games). How can even the best Christian education program, held perhaps one or two hours a week, compete with the pressures of schedules or the lure of TV unless parents intentionally take time to

²This study and others are cited in Strommen & Hardel (2000). For another important resource that emphasizes the role of parents in the religious formation of children, see Thompson (1996).

complement that program with religious practices in the home and with regular family discussions about religious questions and beliefs?

In the third place, many churches consider reflection on the moral and spiritual formation of children as “beneath” the work of their theologians and as a fitting area of inquiry only for pastoral counselors and religious educators. Consequently, systematic theologians and Christian ethicists say little about children and offer few well-developed teachings on the nature of children or our obligations to them. Although churches have highly developed teachings on related issues such as abortion, human sexuality, gender relations, and contraception, they do not offer sustained reflection on children or our obligations toward them. Children also do not play a role in the way that systematic theologians think about central theological themes, such as the nature of faith, language about God, and the task of the church. Certainly, issues regarding children are addressed occasionally in theological reflection on the family. However, “For the most part, church teaching simply admonishes the parents to educate their children in the faith and for children to obey their parents” (Whitmore & Winright, p. 162).³

In the fourth place, national churches have not been consistent public advocates for children. Mainline Protestant churches support legislation to protect children’s health and safety, yet they hesitate to contribute significantly to public debates about strengthening families. Protestant evangelical and conservative churches, on the other hand, are more vocal in nationwide debates about marriage, divorce, and the family, which has been positive. However, these churches sometimes focus so narrowly on the rights of parents to raise and educate their own children without governmental intrusion that they inadequately address the responsibilities of parents, church, and state to protect, educate, and support all children.

Related to the lack of commitment to children that we see in these and other ways, we find both in the church and the wider culture several simplistic views of children and our obligations to them. Many scholars have argued, for example, that in a consumer culture a “market mentality” molds even our attitudes toward children. Thus, instead of seeing children as having inherent worth, we tend to view them as being commodities, consumers, or even economic burdens. The language of children as commodities is most blatant in discussions of reproductive technology, in which “high quality” donor eggs from an Ivy League female cost more than “average” eggs, and parents seek a quality “product” for their investment. But we also speak of children as commodities in more subtle

³ Whitmore is speaking here about teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, but his insight can be applied to Christian theology in general.

ways when we say that they “belong” to us or view them as expressions of ourselves rather than as beings with intrinsic worth or gifts of God. In our culture, children are also certainly understood as major consumers, and we now market countless goods to children in TV shows, videos, and fast-food restaurants. We also treat many children, especially the poor, as economic burdens and do not supply the resources they need to thrive.

Other scholars have noted that we tend to view children as either all good or all bad. For instance, popular magazines or newspapers tend to depict infants and young children as pure and innocent beings whom we adore and teenagers as hidden and dark creatures whom we must fear. In the Christian tradition, we have often focused on children merely as sinful or as creatures that are “not yet fully human.” These kinds of overly simple views diminish children’s complexity and intrinsic value, and thereby undermine our commitment and sense of obligation to them.

Resources from the Tradition for a Broad and Complex View of Children

We can do much to overcome these simplistic views of children and thereby strengthen the church’s commitment to them by retrieving a broader, richer, and more complex picture of children from the Bible and the Christian tradition. Although theologians within the Christian tradition have often expressed narrow and even destructive conceptions of children and childhood, there are six central ways of speaking about the nature of children within the Christian tradition that, when critically retrieved, can broaden our conception of children and strengthen our commitment to them.

1. Gifts of God and Sources of Joy

The Bible and the Christian tradition often depict children as gifts of God, who ultimately come from God and belong to God, and as sources of joy and pleasure. Many passages in the Bible speak of children as gifts of God or signs of God’s blessing. For example, Leah, Jacob’s first wife, speaks of her sixth son as a dowry, or wedding gift, presented by God (Genesis 30:20). Several biblical passages indicate that parents who receive these precious gifts are being “remembered” by God (Genesis 30:22; 1 Samuel 1:11, 19) and given “good fortune” (Genesis 30:11). To be “fruitful” with children is to receive God’s blessing. The Psalmist says children are a “heritage” from the Lord and a “reward” (Psalm 127:3).

All children, whether biological or adopted, are “gifts” to us; they are greater than our own making, and they will develop in ways we cannot imagine or control. Scientists are still exploring the mysteries surrounding

conception; even with great advances in reproductive technology, we still do not understand and cannot control all of the factors that allow for conception and a full-term pregnancy. There is wonder and mystery, too, in the process of adoption.

Children, we should remember, are God's gifts not only to their parents, but also to the community. They will grow up to be sons and daughters but also husbands, wives, friends, neighbors, and citizens.

Related to this notion that children are gifts and signs of God's blessing, the Bible and the tradition speak of them as sources of joy and pleasure. Here, too, there are many examples. Abraham and Sarah rejoice at the birth of their son, Isaac. Even in his terror and anguish, Jeremiah recalls the story that news of his own birth once made his father, Hilkiah, "very glad" (Jeremiah 20:15). An angel promises Zechariah and Elizabeth that their child will bring them "joy and gladness" (Luke 1:14). In the gospel of John, Jesus says, "When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world" (John 16:20-21).

Parents in the past perhaps wanted children for reasons we do not always emphasize today, to perpetuate the nation or to ensure someone would care for them in their old age. Nevertheless, there is a sense today and in the past that one of the great blessings of our interactions with children is simply the joy and pleasure we take in them.

2. Sinful Creatures and Moral Agents

The Christian tradition often describes children as sinful creatures and moral agents.

"The whole nature" of children, John Calvin says, is a "seed of sin; thus it cannot be but hateful and abominable to God" (Quoted in Bunge, 2001, p. 167). Johann Arndt claims that within children lie hidden "an evil root" of a poisonous tree and "an evil seed of the serpent" (1979, pp. 34-35). Jonathan Edwards writes that as innocent as even infants appear to be, "if they are out of Christ, they are not so in God's sight, but are young vipers, and are infinitely more hateful than vipers" (Quoted in Bunge, 2001, p. 303).

This view is based on several biblical texts. For example, in Genesis we read that every inclination of the human heart is "evil from youth" (Genesis 8:21) and, in Proverbs, that folly is "bound up in the heart" of children (Proverbs 22:15). The Psalms declare that we are sinful at birth and that "the wicked go astray from the womb; they err from their birth" (Psalms 51:5; 58:3). All people are "under the power of sin," the Apostle Paul writes, so "there is no one who is righteous, not even one" (Romans 3: 9-10; cf. 5:12).

On the surface, this way of thinking about children can seem negative and destructive. What good does it do to speak about children, especially infants, as sinful? Isn't this view of children hopelessly out of touch with contemporary psychological conceptions of children that emphasize their potential for development and need for loving nurture? Doesn't this emphasis on sin lead automatically to the harsh and even brutal treatment of children?

Certainly, in some cases, viewing children as sinful has led to their severe treatment and even abuse. Recent studies of the religious roots of child abuse show how the view of children as sinful or depraved, particularly in some strains of European and American Protestantism, has led Christians to emphasize that parents need to "break their wills" at a very early age with harsh physical punishment. This kind of emphasis on the depravity of children has led, in some cases, to the physical abuse and even death of children, including infants.

Although this abuse and even milder forms of physical punishment must be rejected, and although viewing them exclusively as sinful often has warped Christian approaches to children, the notion that children are sinful is worth revisiting and critically retrieving.

There are four helpful aspects of the notion that children are sinful that we must keep in mind if we are going to avoid narrow and destructive views of children.

First, when we say children are sinful, we are saying that they are born into a "state of sin," into a world that is not what it ought to be. Their parents are not perfectly loving and just; social institutions that support them, such as schools and governments, are not free from corruption; and communities, in which they live, no matter how safe, have elements of injustice and violence. All levels of human relationships are not the way they ought to be. Furthermore, in addition to the brokenness of relationships and institutions in which they are born, human beings find a certain kind of brokenness within themselves. As we grow, develop, and become more conscious of our actions, we see how easy it is for us either to be self-centered or to place inordinate importance on the approval of others.

Second, when we say children are sinful, we are also saying that they carry out "actual sins," that they are moral agents who sometimes act in ways that are self-centered and harmful to themselves and others. We are taking into account a child's capacity to accept some degree of responsibility for harmful actions. These "actual sins" (against others and or oneself) have their root in the "state of sin" and a failure to center our lives on the divine. Instead of being firmly grounded in the "infinite" that is greater than ourselves, our lives become centered on "finite" goals and achievements, such as career success, material gain, our

appearance, or the approval of others around us. When this happens, it is easy for us to become excessively focused on ourselves; we lose the ability to love our neighbors as ourselves and to act justly and fairly. This view of “actual sins” of children becomes distorted when theologians mistakenly equate a child’s physical and emotional needs or early developmental stages with sin. However, when used cautiously and with attention to psychological insights into child development, it can also strengthen our awareness of a child’s growing moral capacities and levels of accountability.

Although it is important to recognize that children are born in a state of sin and are moral beings capable of actual sins against God and others, a third important aspect of the notion that children are sinful, emphasized by many theologians in the tradition, is that infants and young children are not as sinful as adults and therefore need to be treated tenderly. They do not need as much help to love God and the neighbor. They have not gotten into bad habits or developed negative thoughts and feelings that reinforce destructive behaviors. The positive way of expressing the same idea is that young people are more easily formed than adults, and it is easier to nurture them and set them on a straight path. This is one reason that most theologians who have emphasized that children are sinful have never concluded that children should be physically punished or treated inhumanely. Rather, they view them as “tender plants” that need gentle and loving guidance and care instead of harsh treatment.

A fourth and final dimension of viewing children as sinful is that some theologians who have viewed children as sinful also view them as equals, and they thereby have shattered barriers of gender, race, and class. For example, A. H. Francke, an 18th century German Pietist, responded to the needs of poor children in his community of Halle. He built an extensive complex of charitable and educational institutions to address their needs. He even allowed gifted poor students and orphans to prepare for a university education alongside children of the upper and middle classes - something unheard of in his time. His notion of original sin provided a kind of positive, egalitarian framework of thought that opened a door to responding to the needs of poor children, seeing them as individuals with gifts and talents to be cultivated, and positively influencing educational reforms in Germany.⁴

3. Developing Beings Who Need Instruction and Guidance

A third central perspective within the tradition is that children are developing beings that need instruction and guidance. Because children are “on their way” to becoming adults, they need nurture and guidance from adults to help them develop intellectually, morally, and spiritually. They need

⁴ For further information about Francke, see Bunge (2001, pp. 247-278).

to learn the basic skills of reading, writing, and thinking critically. They also need to be taught what is right and just and to develop particular virtues and habits that enable them to behave properly, to develop friendships, and to contribute to the common good.

The Bible encourages adults to guide and nurture children. In Genesis, Proverbs, Deuteronomy, and Ephesians, for example, we find many passages about the responsibilities of adults to nurture children. Adults are to “train children in the right way” (Proverbs 22:6) and bring up children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Parents and caring adults should tell children about God’s faithfulness (Isaiah 38:19) and “the glorious deeds of the Lord” (Psalm 78:4b). They are to teach children the words of the law (Deuteronomy 11:18-19; 31:12-13), the love of God alone (Deuteronomy 6:7), and what is right, just, and fair (Genesis 18:19; Proverbs 2:9).

There are also many examples in the tradition of theologians who took seriously the education and formation of children. John Chrysostom, in the 4th century, wrote sermons on parenting and the duties of parents to nurture the faith of their children. Martin Luther and Calvin also wrote catechisms and religious education materials for parents to use in the home, and they emphasized the responsibility of parents to guide and to instruct their children in the faith.

We might say that adults are to attend to the “whole being” of children and provide them with emotional, intellectual, moral, and spiritual guidance. Thus, in addition to providing children with a good education and teaching them skills that are necessary to earn a living and raise a family, adults are to instruct children about the faith and help them develop moral sensibilities, character, and virtue so that they can love God and love the neighbor with justice and compassion.

4. Whole and Complete Human Beings Made in the Image of God

Although children are developing, they are, at the same time, whole and complete human beings made in the image of God. Thus, they are worthy of dignity and respect. The basis of this claim is Genesis 1:27, which states that God made humankind in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Thus, all children, regardless of race, gender, or class, are fully human and worthy of respect. Although children are developing, they are, at the same time, whole and complete human beings. As Herbert Anderson and Susan Johnson (1994) remind us, “Childhood is not merely the prelude to adulthood,” because children, even infants, already have “the value and depth of full humanity” (p. 9).

This theme has often been neglected in the Christian tradition, and we find in the tradition the language of children as “almost human” or “beasts” or “on their way to becoming human.” But there are some theologians who have emphasized the full humanity of children, such as the 20th century Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner. In contrast to those who claim that children are not quite fully human or are beings “on the way” toward humanity, Rahner asserts that children have the value and dignity in their own right and are fully human from the beginning. Thus, he believes that we are to respect children from the start. We need to see them as a “sacred trust” to be nurtured and protected at every stage of their existence.⁵

5. Model of Faith for Adults, Sources of Revelation, and Representatives of Jesus

The New Testament depicts children in striking and even radical ways as moral witnesses, models of faith for adults, sources or vehicles of revelation, and representatives of Jesus. In the gospels we see Jesus blessing children, embracing them, rebuking those who would turn them away, healing them, and even lifting them up as models of faith. He identifies himself with children and equates welcoming a little child in his name to welcoming himself and the one who sent him. “Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus warns. “Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:2-5). He adds, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matthew 19:14).⁶

The perspectives on children found in the gospels continue to be as striking today as they were in Jesus’ time. In the first century, children occupied a low position in society, abandonment was not a crime, and children were not put forward as models for adults. Even today, we rarely emphasize what adults can learn from children.

One of the theologians who did emphasize what adults can learn from children was Friedrich Schleiermacher, the 19th century Protestant theologian. He emphasized that adults who want to enter the kingdom of God need to

⁵ For an introduction to Rahner’s ideas about children, see M.A. Hinsdale’s article, *Infinite Openness To The Infinite: Karl Rahner’s contribution to modern Catholic thought on the child*, in Bunge (2001, pp406-445).

⁶ Some of the most significant passages in the gospels are Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9:46-48, Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 11:25 and 21:14-16. For discussion of these and other passages in the New Testament, see J. Gundry-Volf, *The Least and The Greatest: Children in the New Testament* in Bunge (2001, pp. 29-60).

recover a childlike spirit. For him, this childlike spirit has many components that we can learn from children, such as living fully in the present or being able to forgive others and be flexible.⁷

6. Orphans, Neighbors, and Strangers in Need of Justice and Compassion

Finally, there are many biblical passages and examples in the tradition that remind us that children are also orphans, neighbors, and strangers who need to be treated with justice and compassion. There are numerous biblical passages that explicitly command us to help widows and orphans - the most vulnerable in society.⁸ These and other passages clearly show us that caring for children is part of seeking justice and loving the neighbor.

There are many examples within the Christian tradition of leaders who have taken seriously the situation of poor children. Luther and Phillip Melancthon influenced positive policies and reforms in Germany for universal education that included girls and the poor. Francke attended to poor children in his community and built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to serve them and their families. Like Luther and Melancthon, he also influenced positive educational policies and reforms in Germany so that all children could receive a good education. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, is another strong example of a theologian who attended to the poor in concrete ways, and he inspired Methodists from his time to today to care for the poor and to establish a number of institutions and initiatives to serve them.

When we retreat, dangers emerge

Whenever we retreat from this rich, complex, and almost paradoxical view of children found in the Bible and Christian tradition, and we focus instead on only one or two aspects of what children are, we risk falling into deficient understandings of children and our obligations to them, and we risk treating them in inadequate and harmful ways. Here are a few examples from the past and today.

Consider what happens when we view children primarily as gifts of God and as models of faith. Though we will enjoy children and learn from them, we may neglect their moral responsibilities and minimize the role that parents and other caring adults should play in a child's moral development. In the end, we

⁷ For an introduction to Schleiermacher's view of children, see D. DeVries' article, "Be converted and become as little children: Friedrich Schleiermacher on the religious significance of childhood," in Bunge (2001, pp. 329-49).

⁸ See, for example, Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 10:17-18 and 14:28-29.

may adopt a “hands off” approach to parenting or religious education that underestimates the responsibilities of both adults and children.

We see this inadequate view of children and our obligations to them in the past and still today. For example, Horace Bushnell, a 19th century theologian, emphasized the joys of children and their gifts to us and said less about their sinful nature.⁹ Bushnell’s approach to children has much strength. He emphasizes the need to enjoy children, to treat them kindly and with compassion, and to nurture them in the faith in a positive and even playful manner. Bushnell also specifically rejects the corporal punishment of children. He said that parents are the primary agents of a child’s spiritual formation and emphasized “Religion never penetrates life until it becomes domestic” (Bushnell, 1861/1994, p. 63). He also pointed to unjust familial and social structures that can negatively influence children. However, he did not fully address the sinful nature and moral capacities of children themselves and thereby almost eliminates any discussion of a child’s own moral responsibilities or sense of accountability.

We see both the influence and difficulties of this model of parenting in the church and our wider culture today. Some Christians today emphasize the innocence and wisdom of children, but fail to articulate the full range of adult responsibilities to children, as well as a child’s own growing moral capacities. They neglect building strong educational programs for children or emphasizing the responsibilities of parents. In popular culture, too, since we tend to see infants and young children as innocent and playful, yet teenagers as dangerous or threatening, when twelve or fourteen year olds commit serious crimes, we have difficulty discussing their developing moral accountability. We see them either as innocent victims of forces beyond their control or as adult offenders who should be locked up for life.

On the other hand, if we view children primarily as sinful and in need of instruction, then we do emphasize the role of parents and other caring adults in guiding and instructing children, and we do recognize a child’s own moral responsibilities. However, we may neglect to learn from children, delight in them, and be open to what God reveals to us through them. Furthermore, we may narrowly restrict our understanding of parenting and religious education to instruction, discipline, and punishment.

This approach can be found in milder and more extreme forms throughout church history and in some parenting manuals and religious education materials written by Christians today. For example, although several influential theologians in the past did not recommend physically punishing children, they did focus on their sinful nature, paving the way for justifying harsh punishment against them.

⁹ For an account of bushnell’s view of children and its strengths and weaknesses, see M. Bendroth’s article, Horace Bushnell’s Christian Nurture, in Bunge (2001, pp. 350-364).

Augustine, for example, showed compassion for children and for his own son. However, by emphasizing the sinful nature of children, he also often misunderstood important developmental stages of children as signs of sin. Although Jonathan Edwards, an 18th century American Calvinist, is often accused of treating children harshly, there is no concrete evidence that he recommended the physical punishment of children, as Catherine Brekus has demonstrated.¹⁰ Furthermore, he claimed that Christ loved children and believed they have rich spiritual lives. Nevertheless, Edwards appropriates and intensifies Calvin's severe language of the sinful child and is well known for preaching openly and forcefully about infant damnation and childhood depravity. He also speaks directly and vividly to children themselves about the pains of hell and God's terrible wrath.

Although these theologians did not specifically recommend physical punishment of children, the narrow focus on the sinful child and original sin found in their work and that of others has played a role in supporting the harsh and even brutal treatment of children. We see this, for example, in the recommendations of severe treatment of native American children and in instances of their sexual abuse in Christian boarding schools from the 17th to the 20th century in Canada and this United States. Even today, many Protestant evangelicals and fundamentalists emphasize the sinful nature of children and advocate physical punishment to address it. They certainly do not advocate abuse of children. However, the focal point of the discussion of child-parent relationships is often merely obedience, discipline, and physical punishment, and the major assumption about children is that they are rebellious and defiant. These sinful tendencies are to be conquered by strict discipline, including physical punishment. By focusing attention on discipline and a child's sinfulness, the view of children and child-parent relationships becomes too narrow. There is little room for enjoying children and valuing their full humanity. Furthermore, this harsh and narrow view of children as sinful seems far-removed from the gospel accounts of Jesus welcoming children, embracing them, and reminding adults that we can learn from them. Finally, focusing on children solely as sinful and in need of instruction has real dangers. It has been easier for Christians who regard children solely as sinful to brutally punish them or "beat the devil" out of them.

In order to avoid these dangers, a solid and biblically informed view of children must take into account the six perspectives outlined above. It must incorporate a complex view of the child that holds together the inherent tensions of being a child: fully human and made in the image of God yet still developing and in need of instruction and guidance; gifts of God and sources of joy yet also

¹⁰ See Bunge (2001, pp. 327-328).

capable of selfish and sinful actions; metaphors for immature faith and childish behavior and yet models of faith and sources of revelation.

Implications

If we can avoid these kinds of inadequate approaches to children in the culture and the church, and if we can appropriate and hold in tension all six biblical perspectives of children, then we can strengthen our commitment to children in several ways.

For example, these six ways of speaking about children could strengthen spiritual formation and religious education programs. If we see children as gifts of God and sources of joy, then we will include more joy and laughter as part of religious education at home and at church. If we see them as developing beings in need of instruction, then we will create more substantial religious educational materials and programs for children in the church and establish

Christian education programs that emphasize the importance of the family in spiritual formation and faith development.

Furthermore, if we see children as sinful beings and moral agents, then we will also more readily

"Furthermore, this harsh and narrow view of children as sinful seems far-removed from the gospel accounts of Jesus welcoming children, embracing them, and reminding adults that we can learn from them."

recognize and cultivate their growing moral capacities and responsibilities by introducing them to good examples, mentors, and stories of service and compassion; including children in service projects and teaching them financial responsibility; and helping them discern their vocations and explore how they can best use their gifts and talents to contribute to the common good. Finally, if we truly believe, as Jesus did, that children can teach adults and be moral witnesses, models of faith, and sources of revelation, then we will listen more attentively to children and learn from them; structure our religious education programs in ways that honor their questions and insights; and recognize the importance of children in the faith journey and spiritual maturation of parents and other adults.

The six ways of speaking about children could also deepen theological and ethical reflection on children and inform a strong theology of childhood. For

example, if we see children as gifts of God, then we will no longer see them as “belonging” to their parents but rather as gifts to the whole community. We will also take more seriously our obligations to all children, and we will therefore strengthen theological and ethical reflection on parental responsibilities and on the role of church and state in protecting children. We will also encourage more programs that help prevent divorce and support all families. If we see children as developing beings in need of instruction, then we will also begin to understand spiritual formation as a serious area of inquiry in all areas of theological and biblical studies - not just pastoral care or religious education. In these and other ways, we could build up a strong theology of childhood.

The six ways of speaking about children could help renew the church’s commitment to serving and protecting all children. If we view children as made in the image of God and as orphans, neighbors, and strangers in need of compassion and justice, then we will include children in the worship service as true participants and welcome them as full members of the church. We will also treat all children, regardless of age, race, class, or gender, with more dignity and respect. We will no longer tolerate the abuse or harsh treatment of children, and we will warn against equating “discipline” with physical punishment. Furthermore, we will support local and federal legislation that addresses the needs of all children and families, such as fighting for a truly working wage, parental leave policies, universal health care, and strong education for all children. As a society, we will provide the resources they need to thrive, including proper nutrition and adequate health care. We will attend to the needs of poor children in our community and around the world, work more diligently to protect and serve all children in need, and become stronger and more creative advocates for children in our country and around the world.

There are many other implications of a complex and biblically informed understanding of children. All of these examples illustrate how a more vibrant view of children can combat simplistic and destructive conceptions of them and thereby strengthen our commitment to them. By appropriating a view of children that incorporates these six central perspectives on children found in the Bible and the tradition and outlined in this article, all of us can strengthen our efforts in spiritual formation and religious education; do what we can to facilitate a stronger theology of childhood in the church; and take up more wholeheartedly and responsibly the Christian call to love and care for all children. —*LEJ*

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¹ This study and others are cited in Strommen & Hardel (2000). For another important resource that emphasizes the role of parents in the religious formation of children see Thompson (1996).

² Whitmore is speaking here about teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, but his insight can be applied to Christian theology in general.

³ For further information about Francke, see Bunge (2001, pp. 247-278).

⁴ For an introduction to Rahner's ideas about children, see M. A. Hinsdal's article, Infinite openness to the infinite: Karl Rahner's contribution to modern Catholic thought on the child, in Bunge (2001, pp. 406-445).

⁵ Some of the most significant passages in the gospels are Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9:46-48, Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 11:25 and 21:14-16. For discussion of these and other passages in the New Testament, see J. Gundry-Volf, The least and the greatest: Children in the New Testament in Bunge (2001, pp. 29-60).

⁶ For an introduction to Schleiermacher's view of children, see D DeVries' article, "Be converted and become as little children: Friedrich Schleiermacher on the religious significance of childhood," in Bunge (2001, pp. 329-349).

⁷ See, for example, Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 10:17-18 and 14:28-29.

⁸ For an account of Bushnell's view of children and its strengths and weaknesses, see M. Bendroth's article, Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture, in Bunge (2001, pp. 350-364).

⁹ See Bunge (2001, pp. 327-328).

A Comparison of Lutheran, Anabaptist, and Wesleyan Traditions on Children's Spirituality: Origins and Occasions for Nurture

Gary L. Bertels

During the month of June 2003, participants gathered on Concordia, River Forest's campus for a conference on Children's Spirituality. Attendees represented a variety of Christian traditions. This author had the opportunity to represent Lutheranism on a panel composed of representatives of Roman Catholicism, the Anabaptist tradition, Wesleyanism, and Lutheranism. What follows is this author's presentation and his summary of the presentations from two of the other traditions. In presenting these summaries for the reader's consideration, this author recognizes the inherent hazards in speaking on another's behalf.

An attempt will be made to represent the understandings of the Lutheran, Anabaptist, and Wesleyan traditions, beginning with a Lutheran perspective on Children's Spirituality – its origins and occasions for nurture. Following the Lutheran perspective, the Anabaptist and Wesleyan traditions perspectives on Original Sin, God's grace, and faith will be presented.

Lutheran Perspective

At each Baptism in the Lutheran Church, following the Trinitarian Invocation, the Officiant proclaims, "Our Lord commanded Baptism, saying to his disciples in the last chapter of Matthew, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.' The holy apostles of the Lord have written: 'The promise is for you and your children (Acts 2:39),' and: 'Baptism now saves you (1 Peter 3:21).'"

The rite continues with the Officiant identifying the necessity of Baptism, “We also learn from the Word of God that we all are conceived and born sinful and so are in need of forgiveness. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the Father of all mercy and grace has sent His Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

When the rite involves infants and young children, our Lord’s words concerning the place of children in God’s kingdom are introduced with the invitation, “Hear how our Lord Jesus Christ has opened the kingdom of God to little children. ‘People were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, ‘Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.’”

In this sacramental rite, Lutherans are responding to the Lord’s command to baptize all nations, which, because of their need for salvation, includes infants and children. Lutherans affirm that Christian baptism is the starting point of a life lived in a restored relationship with God through Christ, a relationship lost in the fall into sin by our first parents, and now restored through faith in the obedience, passion, death, and resurrection of the New Adam, Jesus Christ. In Titus 3 Paul declares, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Without regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, all nations would remain spiritually blind and dead.

In identifying the activities of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, the Small Catechism of Luther articulates the lost spiritual condition and the grace of God when it states, “I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith” (Tappert, p. 345). It is the Spirit’s calling through the Gospel, which is the power of regeneration and renewal for infants and adults. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession Melanchthon writes, “Through the Word and the rite God simultaneously moves the heart to believe and take hold of faith, as Paul says (Rom. 10:17), ‘Faith comes from what is heard.’ As the Word enters

through the ears to strike the heart, so the rite of baptism itself enters through the eyes to move the heart. The Word and the rite have the same effect, as Augustine said so well when he called the sacrament ‘the visible Word,’ for the rite is received by the eyes and is a sort of picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore both have the same effect” (Tappert, p. 211).

Baptism is a means by which God’s Spirit comes to grace lives with forgiveness, acceptance, and love. Luther, in his Small Catechism states, “In baptism God works forgiveness of sins,

“In this sacramental rite, Lutherans are responding to the Lord’s command to baptize all nations, which, because of their need for salvation, includes infants and children.”

delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare” (Tappert, p. 348).

God is the initiator of all good gifts received in this life, including the gift of having the ability to have faith. “By grace you have been saved through faith – and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God— not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). God’s love and acceptance are not based on goodness. They are gifts that come whether deserved or not, purely out of Fatherly divine goodness and mercy.

In Christian Baptism, God is the active force. He is doing the giving. God is doing the accepting. As with all of God’s good gifts, one does not initiate God’s gift of acceptance in baptism, one simply receives it. Later, as one grows to know and understand that God has accepted us, one gradually accepts God’s acceptance— first one receives, then one believes.

The Psalmist declares in Psalm 51, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). For the psalmist sin is a state of being, out of which proceeds actual sins of thought, word, and deed, a human condition inherited from conception. Christ tells Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Left to ourselves in this sinful state there would be no hope! But, as always, God takes the initiative —“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). In Baptism God destroys the power of sin by joining believers to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through baptism the old self with all its sin and rebellion is drowned and buried.

St. Paul writes, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). In Col.2: 11-12 Paul locates the power of regeneration in God, "... and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Edmund Schlink (1972) summarizes the Lutheran understanding of infant baptism as follows: "What is decisive for the practice of infant Baptism is the conviction that through Baptism God has mercy also on the children, makes them Christ's own, and transfers them by the Holy Spirit from the dominion of sin, death, and the devil into the life of the children of God" (p. 143)

Luther's understanding that following baptism there are now two me's - same-time sinner (being born of the flesh), and same-time saint (being born of the Spirit) - recognizes that the power for spiritual nurture through the Means of Grace is to be directed towards the "new me," the baptized child of God. Through the means of Grace God seeks to nurture the child until the new person in Christ becomes the dominant character of their being. The vestiges of original sin remain as long as one is in their earthen tent. However, the new person in Christ now relates to God through the baptismal gift of faith.

The faith that is given at baptism must be nurtured if it is to come alive and mature in the life of the child. As children mature in the family of God and hear the word of the Gospel, they learn to know God, to love God, and to trust God for strength, peace, and joy. As part of the rite of Holy Baptism, the following admonition is addressed to parents and sponsors: "It is your task as sponsors to confess with the whole Church the faith in our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose name this child is to be baptized. After this child has been baptized you are at all times to remember her in your prayers, put her in mind of her baptism, and, as much as in you lies, give your counsel and aid, especially if she should lose her parents, that she be brought up in the true knowledge and worship of God and be taught the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; and that, as she grows in years, you place in her hands the Holy Scriptures, bring her to the services of God's house, and provide for her further instruction in the Christian faith, that she come to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood and thus, abiding in her baptismal grace and communion with the Church, she may grow up to lead a godly life to the praise and honor of Jesus Christ." It is the conviction of Lutheranism, along with the Apostle Paul that it is the responsibility of

Christian parents, assisted by sponsors and the congregation, to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

The pledge of the parents and sponsors outlines the various activities through which the faith of the child endowed through baptism is nurtured to spiritual maturity. Primary among those activities is prayer. Parents, sponsors, and the entire congregation are to remember children in their prayers, corporate and private. These prayers will include petitions for the temporal well being of the child, which will always include the provision, "never-the-less, not my will, but thine be done." But more confidently these prayers will also include petitions for the spiritual well being of the child - deliverance from temptation and evil, strengthening of faith, forgiveness of sins, all of which are in accordance with God's will for all people.

In addition to prayer, the family and congregation are to keep the child in mind of her baptism – celebrating baptismal birthdays; acknowledging them as fellow members of God's kingdom; filling the community worship environment with visual and tactile reminders of God's grace outpoured in the waters of baptism; speaking the words of blessing proclaimed at her baptism; and, making the sign of the cross under which she was baptized.

A key context for parental and congregational spiritual nurture of the child is public worship. Parents pledge to bring the child to the services of God's house and congregation members welcome the child into the family with the words, "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the Body of Christ, a child of the same heavenly Father, to work with us in His kingdom." Recognizing the transformational power of the community of faith gathered of worship and service, congregations will do all within their power to communicate through environment and ritual the value they and God have for children. Provisions for their physical needs; environmental elements which communicate acceptance and love; along with dependable, predictable worship forms which afford all members of the family opportunities to worship the Father, all communicate inclusion.

Lutherans have traditionally placed a high value on the instruction of children, as evidenced in this country by the number of pre-schools, day schools, and high schools. Sunday school, midweek school, vacation Bible school, and the like all have as their objective the spiritual nurture of the baptized.

The Anabaptist Tradition

The Anabaptist tradition, also known as re-baptizers, is best articulated by Menno Simons, and is represented in the Church today by denominations including: Mennonites; Amish; Brethren; Church of God in Christ; and,

Christian Churches, holds the belief that although children have a sinful nature, they are not held accountable by God for their sins until they reach an, “age of accountability.” Therefore, infant baptism is not necessary or beneficial, and one baptized as an infant must be rebaptized.

Menno Simons understood Romans 5:12 to mean that one inherits mortality from Adam, but not the guilt of sin. Children are seen as being innocent until they reach the age of accountability, when they recognize their actual sin and are able to understand the gospel of grace. Anabaptists understand Matthew 18:3, “Unless you become like a child ...” to reference the child’s innocence rather than its trust.

According to the Anabaptist understanding, there are three classes of humans: the saved, the lost, and the innocent. Ministry with children would be directed towards the innocent. Various denominations within the Anabaptist tradition identify the age of accountability to be between 7 years of age and adolescence. Until reaching the age of accountability the Church is to relate to children as being innocent.

The Wesleyan or Holiness Tradition

To appreciate Wesley’s perspective on children, one needs to be acquainted with his understanding of sin and grace. For Wesley, sin is a willful transgression of a known law. Therefore, for Wesley in the original sin, Adam lost his perfect righteousness, but did not lose his reason and free will. Because man’s will was weakened in the Fall, and he is incapable of making the right choice unaided, God approaches man with prevenient grace.

God is at work in the lives of people with prevenient grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace, and glorifying grace. Prevenient grace is God’s uncalled for seeking love.

Wesley holds to three aspects or kinds of sin: original sin, involuntary sin, and willful sin against God’s law. God’s gracious response varies according to these types of sin. God does not hold one responsible for inherited sin or sins of ignorance. One faces condemnation only for the willful acts of rebellion against God, if those have not been repented of and been forgiven by God. Wesley understands original sin as an inherited bent towards sinning. This bent toward sin causes one to be susceptible toward the pull of evil, and this pull leads into intentional sin. Wesley believed that God’s prevenient or preventing grace, or natural conscience, is planted in each person’s heart. So, one does not sin because one has not grace, but because one does not use the grace one has. Lutherans would understand what Wesley calls prevenient grace to be the natural knowledge of God found

in the conscience. Wesley sees the consciences prompting to do what one knows to be right as God's preventing grace. Lutherans would see the conscience judging one for their rebellion against what is written in one's heart because one is not inclined to obey the conscience because of total depravity. Wesley would maintain that one's natural sense of right and wrong is an expression of God's prevenient grace, God at work within, giving one the ability to respond to God.

Wesley believed that from infancy God draws the child in love with this prevenient grace. This grace may be resisted, or its influence stifled through neglect, lack of nurture, or an unwillingness to respond. Wesley

"Recognizing the transformational power of the community of faith gathered of worship and service, congregations will do all within their power to communicate through environment and ritual the value they and God have for children."

believed that because of this prevenient grace children have an early openness to God. However, Wesley believed that through yielding to the pull of sin, most children lose this initial open responsiveness to God, and find themselves in need of God's justifying grace. Prevenient grace also brings one to an awareness of one's sin and plants within the heart a longing to be forgiven through justifying grace.

For Wesley, the sacraments were means that God used to mediate grace and he instructed parents to bring their children to receive infant baptism. Wesley believed that through baptism original sin is washed away, one enters into covenant with God, is admitted into the Church, is adopted by God, and become his children. Wesley rejected the idea that baptism is a lifelong guarantee of salvation. This baptismal grace could be lost or sinned away.

Justifying grace is available to children. This grace comes when one is aware of their need for forgiveness and trusts in God's love and forgiveness.

These three traditions each hold children in high regard, and recognize the important roles played by the family and faith community in the spiritual nurture of children. The perspectives concerning the understanding of original sin, God's grace, faith, and the means of grace find their expression in the curricular materials and activities designed to nurture the child's spiritual formation. As one reviews the teachings of these three traditions, one

recognizes that each is attempting to understand the spiritual life of children, and minister to their needs according to their teachings. Lutherans do well to listen to the understandings of others in order to appreciate the treasure they have received from their tradition based on the word of God. —*LEJ*

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Children's Spirituality and the "Third" Brain

Scottie May

Children are amazing! They respond in remarkable ways to a wide variety of environments using repertoires of responses. As expected, intense, stimulating settings energize and activate children. But I watch in hushed amazement when children are stilled with what appears to be wonder and awe in a contrasting setting - a setting that is slow-paced and calming, inviting reflection.

I have worked with children for years in traditional church settings that are school-like and also more active experiential settings, but my intrigue with their engagement with wonder and their spirituality is more recent. Several factors contributed to this intrigue. Initially it began with exposure to a quiet, gentle, reflective worship approach for young children, as well as encountering Walter Wangerin's (1996) description of a child's dance with God.¹

Then I was introduced to Catechesis of the Good Shepherd based on Maria Montessori's view of the child's abilities. Sophia Cavalletti, an Italian Hebrew scholar, developed the curriculum for this worship approach.² Cavalletti and Montanaro (1999) describe this Catechesis as an experience that provides "a deep joy that makes the child peaceful and serene."

A personal experience catapulted me into intense study of children's spirituality. My extended family, including five grandchildren ages 5-12, accompanied my husband and me to a Taizé service that we regularly attend. These normally active, restless, busy children became calm and still without parental intervention, melting into comfortable positions, gazing at the beauty of the cathedral, enjoying the gentle pacing of this service, and the repetition of the simple prayer songs. Knowing that children would be invited to pass the light of Christ throughout the congregation using thin taper candles made them eager for this point in the service. The ten minutes

of silence that followed was no problem for them in this environment. When the hour-long service ended, our grandchildren were in no hurry to leave but moved forward to sit around the altar gazing at the symbols and the flood of light from the amassed candles.

New Questions - New Insights

Why do children act and respond so differently in these settings? What are they sensing? What happens within the imagination, within the brain? Why are the responses of children in these settings so different from the usual church education settings in which they exhibit restlessness and short attention spans, but also in churches where the pace and music are often fast and intense resulting in excessive energy?

These quiet responses seem to relate to the spirituality of the children, a construct identified by Rebecca Nye as *relational consciousness*, having to do with a child's perception of how the child feels related to people, self and to God (Reimer & Furrow, 2001). Nye's work identifies children's ability to reflect spiritually in sophisticated ways.

Using familiar lay terms, if we designate the language-oriented left-brain as the "first brain" and the creative, intuitive right brain as the "second brain," could there be a "third brain" that might be involved in the holistic responses of children that I've just described?

As I explore these questions, I've been encountering words that force me to think differently about working with children, but also to ask different questions. Here are terms for consideration:

1. Connatural knowing vs. speculative knowing.

Connatural knowing is an *encounter* with what is to be known. Initially infants learn language and sounds in this manner. Speculative knowing is *detached*, rational, theoretical, prepositional - the more traditional "schooling" approach. Christopher Renz (1998) did a study on attitudes toward confirmation among Catholic youth. Traditional religious education focuses on speculative knowing. By the early adolescent age of confirmation, Catholic children have had years of experience with speculative knowing. Renz found that these children are bored, tuned out during confirmation classes, and drop out of church once the rite is achieved. Renz purposes altering traditional religious education by introducing connatural knowing be introduced to young children so that they may *encounter* God rather than being taught about him. Renz feels that consistent early experiences *with* God will allow the desire to know *about* him to grow. This proposed sequence of knowing seems to parallel a child's knowing about her parents: connatural knowing comes first, with the desire for speculative knowing gradually coming later.

2. Third brain.

I first noticed this non-scientific phrase in a work by Mark and Patti Virkler (n.d.) entitled, "Spirit-anointed Teaching." The Virklers claim that the "third brain" is the part of the brain that receives spiritual revelation. Using John 7:38-39,³ they claim that the "Spirit flow" of the third brain guides the two cerebral hemispheric functions. Although I found no anatomical verification for "third" brain, I found several references to the *triune* brain, which will be discussed later.

3. Heart brain.⁴

I also encountered this non-technical phrase in the Virklers' work. They state that the third brain *is* the "heart brain," citing biblical references such as Psalm 19:14, which states that meditation takes place in the heart, and Colossians 3:15, which says that we are to quiet our hearts before the Lord. It is obvious that "heart" in these texts is not referring to the physiological organ; consequently the Virklers use the term "heart brain."

Scripture uses the word *heart* over and over and in various ways, though almost never literally.⁵ Just as in modern usage, the heart is regarded as the seat of the affections (Gen. 18:5; Psa. 62:10), but also as the seat of the intellect (Gen. 6:5), and of the will (Psa. 119:2), and the innermost being (Gen. 6:6). The range of biblical meaning is wide; the heart has intellectual, emotional, volitional, and moral functions. "The state of heart governs the vision of God; from the heart one speaks to God; it is the locus of divine indwelling" (White, 1988, p. 939). Anthropologically in the Old Testament, the heart is the center or focus of a human's inner personal life. In the New Testament the heart may mean personality or inner life, the seat of emotional consciousness, intellectual activities, and volition. According to Brandon (1984), God uses the heart as a means by which to communicate to humans. He writes: "The divine appeal is addressed to the 'heart' of man" (p.499).

Some Findings from Neurobiology

Although not exactly the same as the "third" brain, the concept of a triune brain is not hard to find in scientific literature. The phrase "triune brain" appears to have been first used by neurologist Paul MacLean in about 1970 (Caine & Caine, 1994). The triune brain consists of the neocortex with its left and right cerebral hemispheres, the limbic system, and the reticular functions of the brain stem. The interactions of these three parts of the brain help explain learning and behavior (Diamond & Hopson, 1998).⁶ It had been assumed that the highest level of the brain, the neocortex dominates the other lower levels. According to Diamond and Hopson, MacLean

shows that this is not the case and that the limbic system, which rules emotions, can hijack the higher mental functions when it needs to.

Two decades earlier MacLean had coined the name “limbic system” (ring-like) for the mid-part of the brain that is concerned with emotions. The limbic system as a whole appears to be the primary seat of emotion, attention, and affective (emotion-charged) memories. (Physiologically, it includes the hypothalamus, hippocampus, and amygdala.) Early on MacLean saw a great danger in all this limbic system power. As he understood it, the limbic system tends to be the seat of our value judgments, instead of the more advanced neocortex. The limbic system decides whether the neocortex has a “good” idea or not, whether it feels true and right. Joseph LeDoux (1996) expresses gratitude to MacLean for his pioneering work in identifying the limbic system as the emotional center of brain as does Chauncey Leake (1975), though LeDoux feels he overstated and simplified what is very complex and not yet verifiable.

Each of the components of the three-part limbic system has an interdependent function. The amygdala brings physiological response to the memory of an emotional situation, and the hippocampus helps remember the circumstance of that situation (LeDoux). Daniel Goleman (1995) holds a similar view about this emotional center of the brain. The amygdala, which is quite fully formed at birth, is the emotional specialist also storing emotional memories. The hippocampus remembers “dry facts” relating to emotional experiences. Emotional memories created early in life before words are used may be triggered later in life with “articulated thoughts.” Goleman describes evidence that “feelings” are essential for making rational decisions. “[T]he emotional brain is as involved in reasoning as is the thinking brain” (p. 28).

Neurobiologists now realize that the limbic system has vast interconnections with the neocortex, so that brain functions are not either purely limbic or purely cortical but a mixture of both. Yet, limbic structures “govern sleep, appetite, alertness, sexual behavior, and emotional reactivity, as well as the ability to form attachment to other people, to feel emotions like joy, anger, and love, and to help regulate one’s own reactions. . . . A child held and comforted whenever he cried in the first year of life for as long as needed is likely to develop an amygdala and other parts of the emotional brain that are more capable of calming him” (Diamond & Hopson, 1998, p. 126). The limbic system allows a person to identify life situations as agreeable or disagreeable.

The “Third” Brain - the Limbic System?

Daniel Goleman’s groundbreaking work (1995) in emotional intelli-

gence identifies the role of emotions in the development of the person and the significance of the limbic system in that process. He explains that an infant learns appropriateness of emotions from the responses of the primary caregiver. The infant mirrors the mother's mood, thereby learning to be passive and depressive or animated and responsive. The child attunes to the mother when the emotions are met with empathy, accepted, and reciprocated. These interactions connect to the limbic system through emotion-specific neurons. The emotional brain is as involved in decisions of the growing child as the thinking brain. In fact, it can overpower it. Goleman believes that young children soon learn whether or not empathy is an acceptable value. If it is not, the young child quickly refrains from showing empathy. This may become a long-term coping strategy in that relationship. Emotions and feelings originate in the limbic system, as do some aspects of personal identity and memory functions, according to Goleman.

Neuropsychologist R. Joseph (2001) goes so far as to say "the limbic system may well be the seat of the soul or may serve as the neural transmitter to God" (p. 133). This view is supported by, Andres Newberg, Eugene d'Aquill, and Vince Rause (2002). They studied the spiritual experiences of Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns. These experiences for this population were associated with observable neurological activity. The researchers developed a theory of neurotheology "that provides a link between mystical experience and observable brain function. In simplest terms, the brain seems to have the built-in ability to transcend the perception of an individual self" (p. 174). The intent of neurotheology is "to understand the link between brain function and *all* important aspects of religion" (175). This field of study can become *metatheology*, how specific theological principles of a religion may have arisen, and *megatheology*, the elements all religions have in common.

"[T]hese mystical experiences" occur on a continuum. At the far end of this continuum are the profound states of spiritual unity described by saints and mystics. But the same complex brain function that makes such powerful states possible also enables us to feel much milder, and more 'ordinary' sensations of spiritual connection - the sense of uplift or absorption you feel during moments of prayer or contemplation, for example, or while joining in with your congregation to sing a hymn" (p. 175).

Newberg, et al. (2002), claim that the limbic system is responsible for this ability. "Because of its involvement in religious and spiritual experience, the limbic system has sometimes been referred to as the 'transmitter to God'"

(p. 43). Within this system the hypothalamus is the “master controller” and can generate calming effects but also trigger rage. It links other parts of triune brain since “feelings produced by limbic activity are integrated with higher cognitive functions from the neocortex, resulting in richer, more varied, emotional experiences” (p. 43).

If the data presented by Newberg, et al. (2002), is valid, it provides neurobiological evidence for the timeless significance of *connatural* knowing and of Nye’s concept of spirituality as “relational consciousness.” Experience and encounters with “other” (for our purposes here, “other” is God) are at the core of these concepts. One wonders if the limbic system in some ways might be what the Virklers refer to as the “heart” brain. The limbic system also seems to function partially as an aspect of the ways “heart” is used in Scripture.

Though we know much more in recent years about the complex interrelated workings of the brain, this does not necessarily tell us how to construct learning experiences or encounters with God for spiritual formation. Nor does it “prove” that learning will happen. This information may never lead directly to “correct” pedagogy, but we do know for sure that emotion plays a significant role in learning (Wolfe & Brandt, 1998).

The Spirituality of Children

In *Godly Play*, Jerome Berryman (1991) writes about the significance of language and experience for the young child. His carefully prepared environment, adapted from Cavalletti’s Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, seeks to create space to allow children to begin to formulate and ask existential questions. The environment must create opportunity for interplay between experience and language which at first the child lacks. If experiences of God are provided, language to describe those experiences may develop. Language shapes experience; experience shapes language (p. 153). But the right language must be used. The language of religion, of spiritual formation, is the language of mystery and of relationship. As the child enters into symbols, parables, and narratives, the presence of God may be experienced (p. 148). But wrong language may be spiritually deforming, introducing fear or mistrust of God or even irrelevance.

Berryman (1991) also considers the role of laughter with children: carnival laughter versus godly laughter (p. 16). Godly laughter is that of creation and play. Carnival laughter is raucous, mocking, deriding, easily trivializing religion or turning into “magic” that the child may try to control.⁸

In spite of the importance of language Berryman also identifies the necessity of nonverbal experience. An awareness must be developed to

recognize nonverbal limbic response as well as verbal neocortex response because, in Berryman's words, "falling in love [with the Lord Jesus] through grace" happens through the limbic system, whereas it is spoken about through the left hemisphere of the neocortex (2003).

Other scholars concur with Berryman's position. Kevin Reimer and James Furrow (2001) write, "Cognitively, the child's relational experience precedes the development of spiritual narrative, and then mediates a recursive process of interaction between narrative and new experiences of person, objects, or the

divine" (p. 10). The nonverbal "inner speech" may become the foundation for spirituality. As speech is linked with an internal experience of God, the child is then able to slowly personalize spirituality. The

"The nonverbal "inner speech" may become the foundation for spirituality. As speech is linked with an internal experience of God, the child is then able to slowly personalize spirituality."

child uses symbols from narratives or a concrete experience as the basis for relational consciousness not unlike the concept of bonding (p. 20). As the child integrates the meaning of the symbols with circumstances, identification with God and self as other may take place in relational terms.

Lee Kirkpatrick (1997) also sees attachment or bonding as significant in religious formation. Issues of infant attachment through the availability and responsiveness of the primary caregiver who also serves as a haven and a secure base is considered a fundamental dynamic underlying Christianity and many other theistic religions. Separation from this human attachment figure causes distress. When attachment shifts positively from the caregiver to God, "the mere knowledge of God's presence and accessibility allows a person to approach the problems and difficulties of daily life with confidence" (p. 117). Though the human parent has limitations, the idea of God as the absolute adequate "attachment figure," the protective parent, is always reliable and available when the child is in need. Since we know that early communication between the very young child and her caregiver is key, insights from awareness of the functions of the "third" brain may perhaps enable us to facilitate communication between God and the young child.

But there is a major barrier that needs to be overcome: the assumption that cognitive concepts indicate a child's spirituality (Nye, 2003). God

should not simply “feel like an answer.” Established speculative Christian religious language fails to supply life to the child’s spirituality - his relational consciousness.

David Hay, Rebecca Nye, and Roger Murphy (1996) write: “Over the past thirty years the dominance of cognitive developmental theory in the field of religious education has led to a severe neglect of the study of the spirituality of the child and to a distortion of what goes on in the religious education classroom” (p. 47). This undoubtedly is caused in part by the challenge of finding appropriate methodology. Another factor is the narrowness of developmental stage theories that come “near to dissolving religion into reason and therefore childhood religion into a form of immaturity or inadequacy” (p. 56). Children’s ability to experience the spiritual has been seen as flawed, whereas, in reality their cognition “includes those components which are quintessential to spirituality - skills which are actively pursued by adult practitioners of spirituality” (Levine, 1999, p. 137). If cognitive development is central (“first” brain or left neocortex hemisphere), this emphasis precludes the profound religious faith of mentally retarded people - those who have found group ritual as the significant way in which the relationship with God is sustained. “Could it be that particular cultures, secular or perhaps ‘over-cognitively religious,’ hamper the development of the expression of spirituality because of preconceptions about children’s competencies, or more commonly, their lack of competence?” (p. 64). Research has focused on children’s cognitive comprehension of religious themes while neglecting their personal spiritual experiences.

Epistemological Considerations

To know God is a prime goal for those involved in children’s spiritual formation. But how should that happen? Renz’s (1998) explanation of the differences between speculative (detached) and connatural (encounter) forms of knowing further articulates the challenges that may result from speculative or cognitive experiences. “Speculative intellect uses and seeks after knowledge for the sake of Truth. It is the more reason-oriented or logic-oriented dimension of human intellect. . . . In speculative knowledge a union is possible between knower and known (subject and object) only because what comes to be possessed in knowledge is the ‘immateriality of a thing,’ its form or perfection” (p. 58). This is in contrast to the union in the mind of the subject that arises out of love of the object - a love which may lead the subject to desire “to possess the beloved object” (p. 58).

The Virklers (n.d.) and Parker Palmer (1993), using Jesus’ own words in John 14:6,⁹ describe the quest for truth as encountering the Person who claims

that he *is* Truth. Therefore, for them, “truth is not so much an intellectual activity as it is a heart experience. It is arrived at through a subjective inner experience as one encounters God on the level of his spirit” (Virkler, p. 6).

Renz (1998) describes a child’s spiritual life as beginning with love. “[O]ne cannot love what one does not know. A human moves toward God in love because there is a first experiential encounter with God. . . .

Connatural knowledge is knowledge always directed towards an end. For the human, it is the source of a creative loving response to God’s first offer of love” (p. 59). He goes on to state that effective formational education for the child must have both connatural and speculative experiences, but that connatural knowing should happen first.

Renz (1998) explains that through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Cavalletti seeks “to create an holistic environment in which the child can be in relationship with God.” She describes the development of this space called an atrium: “An ensemble of elements - few and essential - was slowly delineated, which the child showed that he knew, not in an academic way, but as if they were a part of his person, almost as if he had always known them” (p. 22). The atrium experience includes silence - a full silence rather than an empty one. It is a critical part of every atrium. Children love it. It is during times of silence that they sometimes “discover they have an inner life” (Lillig, 1998, p. ?).¹⁰

In the atrium young children, though usually wordless, “speak loudly through their attitudes and bodies” (Cavalletti & Montanaro, 1999). Key values that Cavalletti has identified from observing the children are:

- Joy, deep, peaceful, serene that is evident in their posture, focus and contentedness in being in the atrium.
- Dignity from the ability to have a personal relationship with God, accompanied by wonder, amazement, freedom, and independence.
- Essentiality, which means eliminate frills and fluff because otherwise the young child may be lost in a cluttered, busy environment.

“The spiritual life is to determine what is essential” (Cavalletti & Montanaro, 1999). Therefore, the child is the teacher. Watch the child’s reaction and growth to determine what is essential. Through the parable of the Good Shepherd, the story that most satisfies the younger child’s hunger for relationship, the young child is most struck that the shepherd calls the

sheep by name. (Adults are drawn to the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep.) Give the essentials in word and materials; then step aside letting the Shepherd and the child live together in their relationship, Cavalletti instructs.

She continues: "God is the God of the covenant." Covenant and relationship are synonymous. God is the God of the relationship - the I-Thou. "The child seems to reach completion of his being in relationship with a personal God, being a partner of the covenant" (1992, p. 21). A sense of belonging often flows from that covenant relationship.

What Do We Do Now?¹¹

If the argument presented here - that the "third brain," the limbic system plays a crucial role in the spirituality of the child - then, we scholars and practitioners alike have significant work to do. In addition to continued research in this area, we need to come alongside churches, particularly evangelical churches who tend not to be sacramental or liturgical, to help them navigate this significant paradigm shift which is counter to many contemporary cultural assumptions about what children "need."

One of our first tasks should be to help restore a child's corporate sense of wonder. Current children's ministry tends to diminish a child's wonder. Mathew Woodley (2000) writes, "Wonder-less living has become the norm" (p. 26). Citing Abraham Heschel, he says: "We teach children how to measure, how to weigh. We do not teach them how to revere, how to sense wonder and awe" (p. 26). This amazes Woodley because he feels that if the Lord God is present, that place should be alive with wonder.

Cavalletti's guidelines (1992) have insights particularly for Americans ministering with children: Watch the child's attitudes and actions to learn what is essential; then adjust accordingly. (More is usually not better here, only essentials.) Allow wonder, amazement, freedom, and appropriate independence. Create experiences so the child can relate to God; provide and promote a sense of belonging.

Next we must protect children "as long as we can from the clamor of the world and what it tells them they need to buy for their fulfillment. We must help them to know their own soul and provide or perfect the rituals and forms that will touch the places of life's mysteries and give them back meaning - not a sentimentalized meaning but a meaning that they will never outgrow" (Nelson, p. 117).

Many questions need to be answered:

- What kinds of faith experiences do we want for our children and grandchildren?

- How do we best pass Christian faith on to them? If the outcome of our ministry should be “initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (Renz, 1998, p. 53), how does that happen?
- In what ways do recent findings in neurobiology inform the kinds of experiences we should create for children to help them know God? In what ways does this research refute or support traditional religious education?
- In what ways might different experiences for young children create a revitalized response by teens to their own journey in spiritual formation?
- How do we add or acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit in our ministries and learning experiences with children? What part of a person responds to the Holy Spirit? What facilitates that process?
- How do we help volunteers working with children to value and create silence?
- How do we assure that experiences happen in our ministries in which truth is encountered and practiced (Palmer, 1993)?
- From what I have observed, Catechesis of Good Shepherd makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual development of children. Do we all need to follow this model, or are there other possibilities?

What values do we want to drive our ministries with children? For quite some time, the old paradigm for educational ministry, patterned after the schooling model, has shown itself to be inadequate. But the values of that model were clear: to help children learn the Bible and to obey what it says. Welcomed new paradigms are now common. Those that seem to be driven by a different model often attract lots of children. But in many ministries the most clearly articulated value is that it has to be fun. What might be the long-term implications for children where fun appears to be the dominant value?

Final Thoughts and a Recommendation

Experiences that encourage internal dialogue, connatural learning, or involvement with the “third” brain, seem critical for the spiritual formation of children given the findings just presented. This has significant implications for curriculum development. By the very nature of congregational life, the faith community may be the best place for children to hear spiritual and biblical narratives. “Curriculum largely overlooks the potential for the narrative contribution of local faith communities, and may circumvent it altogether with an individualistic approach to spiritual appropriation in children” (Reimer & Furrow, p. 21). Children need settings where narratives are shared.

For generations in ministry with children we have emphasized the significance of the “first” brain, the cognitive left hemisphere of the neocortex. In recent decades the “second” brain or creative right hemisphere has gotten increasing attention. Given the evidence presented here about the “third” brain, the limbic system, it would behoove relational consciousness and us to take seriously the possibility that we can facilitate children’s experiences or encounters with God by preparing environments that generate connatural knowing which appear to evoke response from that under-recognized part of the brain. Nye’s relational consciousness seems relevant for ministry praxis for the spiritual formation of children. The child’s spirituality should influence the form ministry takes rather than an expert’s advice or a developmental construct.

I would humbly like to propose a new curriculum paradigm using “curriculum” in its broadest, most holistic sense. This paradigm borrows a phrase from a speech the late Christian scholar and educator, Ernest Boyer, gave at a conference for public school administrators. He was calling for core universal commonalities in education. Therefore, I purpose a new paradigm based on the following commonalities:

*Core Universal Commonalities for Children’s Christian Spiritual Formation*¹²

Encounters with God
leading to
A sense of awe and wonder
leading to
Knowing his character and actions
leading to
Knowing and being formed in the character of God’s people
leading to
Owning an identity as part of the people of God
leading to
Service and mission

Undoubtedly each of the “leading to” phrases points to or requires some type of conversion - a new or renewed turning toward the Lord Jesus, a deeper way of allowing Christ to be formed within.

What if we enable children in our churches to encounter God from their earliest years in ways that become the very fabric of their lives so that, as they reach early adolescence, they may be eager learners about the God who made them because they have experienced him? What if...? I want my grandchildren to utilize to the fullest extent what might be God’s intent for the “third brain” - the limbic system. I wonder if that might happen by providing opportunities for living encounters with their living God.—LEJ

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¹ He describes the dance as beginning in the mists before the child's first awareness; then progressing through the *naming, containing, explaining, and claiming* phases. The music for the dance is created by the parents and the church. If the music dies, the dance for the child cannot be sustained.

² Jerome Berryman developed Godly Play, and Sonya Stewart shaped Young Children and Worship, based on principles of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, into a simplified version suitable for non-sacramental churches. (See the resources listed in the references.)

³ John 7:38-39 - "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." As my tradition interprets this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

⁴ Charlotte Korbee conducts Heart-Brain Integration workshops primarily in Europe. She integrates the "discerning and connecting power of the heart with the thinking power of the brain." I found no explanation of how she uses the word "heart." <www.shapersofeducation.org>

⁵ It is interesting to note that the word *heart* appears at least four times more often in the Bible than the 100-250 times the word *mind* occurs, depending on the translation; the word *study* appears fewer than ten times total.

⁶ Some spiritual traditions teach the idea of three planes of consciousness - even three different brains. For example, a person is a "three-brained being" - one for the spirit, one for the soul, and another for the body.

⁷ Quoting Evelyn Underhill, the authors describe mysticism as "the art of establishing conscious relation with the Absolute" (101).

⁸ It is ironic that at the time of this writing, carnival-like atmospheres are becoming increasingly common in children's ministry among churches in the United States.

⁹ John 14:6 - Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

¹⁰ In a recent research project, children at a community center who had had experienced this type of environment verbalized their desire for quiet in what is usually a rather noisy setting. A sixth grader said, "When it's quiet, He [God] just comes to mind."

¹¹ I am currently conducting a research project with 4 and 5 year olds in order to assess changes in their perceptions of God after having a 10-week experience in a Cavalletti-like prepared environment. Though the research is not completed, the children's responses to and reaction in the environment have been startlingly compatible with findings of the literature reviewed in this article.

¹² Envision these commonalities as a circle rather than a sequential list. Entry may be at any point. Different church traditions tend to emphasize some commonalities to the neglect of others. A balance is ideal.

Nurturing Children's Spirituality in Intergenerational Settings

Holly Allen

Something happened to me in the 1990s that changed the way I view children and the way I view Christian education.

At that point I had been a teacher for many years. I had taught in public schools in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Iowa. I had been teaching teachers how to teach for several years in a Christian university. I had also taught Sunday school for decades.

In my Sunday school teaching, given my pedagogical background, I had adopted an educational model. I tended to view children as receptacles into which we pour knowledge - mine was a knowledge-based pedagogy. Over the 1970s and 1980s, I had moved with the times, adopting discovery methods, finding ways to make learning fun and exciting - puppet shows, games, hands-on approaches. But the bottom line was knowledge: Bible stories, books of the Bible, Bible verses, the Ten Commandments, days of creation, fruit of the spirit. I assumed this knowledge would translate into faith and Christian living.

But, as I stated earlier, something happened to me to me in the 1990s. From 1993-1997 my family was part of a small-groups-based church. For the first time in my life, I was frequently with children in religious, spiritual *intergenerational* settings. The children had opportunity to worship in small intimate settings with their parents and other adults, to hear their parents pray, to see their parents minister to others in the group. The children themselves began to pray for one another and to minister to one another - even to the adults. These experiences profoundly changed my understanding of children and my understanding of Christian education.

During those years God grew in me a passion for looking deeply at intergenerational issues - to study this concept, to research it. I could see the blessings to the adults and children in our setting, but I wanted to explain what I saw, why it was such a blessing. I was seeing in these children a spiritual awareness I had not seen when I taught Sunday school and children's church. I wanted to know *why*. I wanted to understand the phenomenon empirically, theoretically, educationally - in ways that I could explain to others.

That God-driven passion has led me on a ten-year journey that I am still traveling. Last year I finished my dissertation, which explored the spirituality of children in intergenerational and non-intergenerational Christian contexts. Before sharing some of the important results of that study, I will explain a few basic terms.

Basic Terms

First, what do I mean by “spirituality”? I looked at over a hundred definitions of spirituality, including Christian spirituality, spiritual formation, and spiritual development. Three definitions of Christian spirituality were especially helpful:

- Graven (1999): “Spiritual dimensions of life involve beliefs, an understanding of God, relationship to God, and understanding the relationship of God to the world and creation” (p. 56).
- Schneiders (1986): “Christian spirituality . . . is constituted by the substantial gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within the believing community” (p. 266).
- Sheldrake (2000): “a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and in the context of community of believers” (p. 40).

The prevailing motif in most current definitions is the idea of relationality - for example, Mead and Nash (1997) say “spirituality is properly defined as the creation and cultivation of an intimate relationship with God” (p. 54). A modified version of this definition that captures the core recurring theme of relationality provides the operative definition for the discussion that follows: awareness of relationship with God.

Next, what do I mean by “intergenerational”? Most simply, intergenerational means one or more generations doing something together. Other phrases that connote the same general idea are: interage, multi-generational, and cross-generational (White, 1988, p. 22). Prest (1993) offers a definition of intergenerational Christian experience. His definition is “the socializing of two or more different age groups, interacting in learning, growing, and developing in the faith, through common experiences of fellowship, worship, sharing, and relationships” (p. 15).

Separating the Generations

During the last hundred years, steady changes have occurred in society that have separated families and segregated age groups, not only in educational settings, but also in life in general. These changes include the universality of age-graded formal schooling, the geographical mobility of families, the movement from extended to nuclear family, the rise of divorce and single-parent families, and the prevalence of retirement and nursing homes for older persons and preschools for the young.

Faith communities are perhaps the only places where families, singles, couples, children, teens, grandparents - all generations - come together on a regular interacting basis. Yet, the societal trend toward age segregation has moved into churches also. Age-based classes for children as well as adults, teen programs, and separate worship services for adults and children tend to separate families and age groups from each other, so that children could experience religion as age-segregated throughout their lives.

Yet religious educationists (e.g., Nelson [1989], Westerhoff III [1976], Moran [1978], and Fowler, [1991]), during the past three decades have been saying in various ways that cross-generational experiences within the community of faith are crucial, essential, even necessary to faith and spiritual development in children. If this is so, the practice of continuously separating children from teens and adults in churches could be detrimental to the children's faith and spiritual growth and development.

Therefore, it is important to establish whether intergenerational (IG) Christian settings nurture children's spiritual development - particularly if IG settings do so in some ways better than homogeneous age groupings. This article will offer empirical, anecdotal, and theological support for the practice of intergenerational Christian experiences.

Empirical Support

Intergenerational Christian settings range from simply including children in the adult worship on Sundays to summer family camps to collaborative drama efforts to intimate small-group settings with adults and children together. In my research I interviewed children from two different types of church settings 1) intergenerational churches - where children are intentionally included regularly in intergenerational activities, and 2) non-intergenerational churches - where children are almost always segregated from adults.

I asked the children a series of questions during a personal interview. *The questions included:* Who do you know who knows God? What is it about that person that makes you think they know God? What does it mean to

know God? Do you know God? How do you know that you know God? How does someone get to know God? What is the difference between someone who knows God and someone who knows about God?

I also asked several feeling questions such as:

When you think about God how do you feel? Can you tell me about a time when you felt surprised or amazed about God? Happy about (or with) God? Sad about God? Have you ever felt angry at God? Scared of God?

Toward the end of the interview I asked the children:

Do you talk to God? What sorts of things you talk to God about? Do you ever listen to God? In what ways does God talk to us? Have you ever thought God talked to you?

Children in both settings gave profound and eloquent testimony to their relationships with God. They spoke of prayer frequently, said they knew God, described knowing God similarly, and understood the essential difference between someone who knows God and someone who only knows *about* God. Children in both samples offered a wealth of evidence attesting to their perception of God as warm and caring.

To illustrate the children's depth of understanding of various spiritual concepts, I've excerpted responses from the interviews. The first excerpts are responses to the question: What is the difference between someone who knows God and someone who know about God?

Luke, 9, Philippi¹: "Someone who knows about God knows he died on the cross and what he did - but someone who knows God worships him."

Junia, 10, Colosse: "Someone who knows God knows him and worships him and a person who knows about him isn't always praying to him."

Hannah, 11, Smyrna: "He [a cousin] knows about him, but he doesn't believe. He says he knows him, but he never talks about him. He will say, 'Yes I believe in him' but he doesn't even have a connection with him."

James, 10, Philippi: "Well, my dad doesn't really know God but he knows about him and my mom knows God and knows about him too. To know about God isn't everything . . . people that know God pray to him and talk to him, read the Bible because they want to."

Esther, 9, Antioch: “They have Jesus in their head, but they don’t have Jesus in their heart.”

This question surfaced the children’s understanding of knowing God in a deeper way than I had anticipated. However, the feeling questions tapped more deeply into the children’s awareness of their own relationship with God. Two samples below illustrate that depth:

Interviewer: “Can you tell me about a time when you have been angry at God?”

James, 10, Philippi: “When I was littler, when my parents got divorced I wasn’t able to see both of them all the time.”

Interviewer: “You were angry at God?”

James: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “How did you know you were angry at God, what did you say?”

James: “I don’t remember, it was too long ago.”

Interviewer: “But you remember being . . .”

James: “Frustrated, like it was his fault that he didn’t keep them together.”

Another child:

Interviewer: “Can you tell me about a time when you have been angry at God?”

Noah, 11, Ephesus: “Maybe just a little bit.”

Interviewer: “Do you remember specific examples?”

Noah: “The way my sister’s been acting drives me crazy and it makes me angry at God to think why did he stick me with her! I think what he’s done is kind of raised my tolerance level.”

These responses reflect the idea that the children accepted as a matter of course that God knows them and is involved intimately in the ordinary (and traumatic) events in their lives.

Perhaps more than any other set of comments on a particular practice or subject, the children's comments concerning prayer shed light on the depth and quality of their spiritual lives. Also, this area yielded the largest differences between the groups. The following samples are the "prayer files" of two of the participants. A "prayer file" consists of every comment the participant made concerning prayer, either in response to a question about their prayer life, or an "unprompted" remark made in response to some of the other questions. The following is the prayer file of Boaz, 11, of Smyrna:

Can you describe a time when you felt really happy about God? "Well, I've been praying for my great grandmother and she's been staying alive and that's pretty cool."

"children's comments concerning prayer shed light on the depth and quality of their spiritual lives."

Can you describe a time when you felt sad about God? "Well, sometimes I have prayed for somebody to get well and they don't."

Can you describe a time when you felt angry at God? "Yes. Well, sometimes when I'm done praying for something and I don't get it, like something that I really wanted to happen."

Can you describe a time when you felt an overwhelming love for God? "Well, a few nights ago I was just laying in my bed and I was just like, 'God you are so awesome.'"

What does it mean to know God? "Like my friend Brandon, I can tell he knows God because I've been to church with him before and he just gets really into it." *Gets into what?* "The worship and prayer."

How do you think someone gets to know God? "Praying, reading the Bible, listening to Him."

What are some things that you do that help you know that you know God? "Well, I just pretty much every night I just talk to him a lot. If there's anything I want to say to him I just say it."

What sort of things do you talk to God about? "I talk to him about Harry Potter and stuff like that, if he thinks I should stop reading it. So far I think he hasn't really told me anything about it, just kind of drawn me away from it just a little bit. . . . There's still only four but I have only read three of them. My dad's reading the first one to see if it's okay."

What else do you pray about? “Well, if I like this girl or something I will pray that I don’t go into anything bad or anything like that.”

What else do you talk to God about? “I pretty much pray about my family, if anybody is sick that they will get better.”

What else? “Sometimes I pray that I will get to know him better.”

Were you ever afraid or alone, and you think God helped you? Would you tell me about that? “Yes. At night when I was going to bed when I was younger I would see the tree shadow and I would be scared. I would like see shadows on the wall and like be really afraid and ask him to protect me. There was one time where I think a month ago when it was really good weather and the lights went out and I was really scared and I asked him for protection.”

Has your family ever needed special help and you think God helped? Would you tell me about that? “Well my other grandmother, my mom’s mom had cancer and we prayed for her and she got better and now she’s having cancer again but we don’t think she’s going to get better this time.”

How will you deal with it this time if she doesn’t get better? “Well, I’ll just ask God to comfort us. I think she’s 74.”

Boaz’ prayer file is one of the longest and most eloquent. Boaz meets regularly in an intergenerational small group and worships on Sunday mornings with his family at the church he attends.

Below is the prayer file of Martha, 11, of Philippi.

Do you think you know God? “Yes.” (strong answer)

Tell me about that. “I know that I know God because my family grew up in a Christian home. Go to church. I asked him into my life. When I feel bad or something I sit in my room and talk to him.”

What sort of things do you talk to God about? “When my grandpa died - about that. When my grandma died; when my friend had a problem. They had to move out of their house, their apartment; they didn’t have anywhere to go. They lived with some people awhile, but they didn’t know where to go. But now she’s with her aunt.”

How did you know her? “She used to come here.”

What else do you pray about? “About the homeless; help me be safe; help when I’m sick.”

Martha’s prayer file is rather short, and her comments seem perfunctory. Martha has not had the opportunity to participate in intergenerational activities in the church she attends.

Some of the children from the non-intergenerational churches had fairly extensive prayer files; some did not. Though that was also true of the children in intergenerational settings, the intergenerational children referred

to prayer more often and exhibited relationality in more of their discussions of prayer than did the children from non-IG settings. (See Chart 1 for further detail.) 1 Names used in this article are the code names chosen by the participants in the study. The church names are also code names.

Intergenerational		Non-Intergenerational	
<i>Participant</i>	<i># times prayer mention</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i># times prayer mention</i>
#14 Elijah	4	#7 Barnabas	2
#32 Esther	3	#30 Bartholomew	5
#27 Eve	5	#13 Cornelius	4
#16 Caleb	5	#26 Dorcas	4
#25 Joseph	2	#1 Joanna	6
#34 Leah	5	#21 Junia	0
#2 Levi	4	#35 Mark	3
#29 Nathaniel	3	#17 Paul	3
#11 Noah	1	#38 Priscilla	5
#20 Rebekkah	6	#8 James	3
#6 Sara	6	#22 Luke	1
#15 Abigail	6	#4 Lydia	3
#37 Adam	2	#40 Martha	1
#3 Benjamin	6	#31 Mary	1
#28 Boaz	6	#39 Philip	2
#33 Hannah	7	#318 Stephen	4
#10 Micah	2	#36 Tabitha	5
#19 Miriam	3	#9 Thomas	4
#24 Seth	3	#12 Julia	2
#5 Zipporah	7	#23 Phoebe	2

Chart 1: Tallied is the number of times the children mentioned prayer (before the questions about prayer). In a statistical comparison the t-test was significant, $t(38)=2.37, p=.02$.

Analyses of the responses in other areas yielded differences also. For example, in defining the concept of knowing God, a larger number of IG children gave relational descriptions of that concept than did non-IG children. In general, though both groups of children gave profound and eloquent testimony to their relationships with God, the IG children in my study were more aware of their relationship with God, that is, a larger number of them spoke more frequently and more reciprocally of that relationship.

Theological and Biblical Support

Of course, IG gatherings are not a new invention of contemporary

churches. God's directives for the Israelites included many opportunities for families and the community to celebrate together, to worship together, to discuss theological matters. In the religion of Israel, children were not just included, they were drawn in, assimilated, absorbed into the whole community with a deep sense of belonging (Harkness, 1998, p. 436). Though many examples could be cited, the directives for feasts and celebrations illustrate this point best. These commanded festivals were celebrated annually and included elaborate meals, dancing, instrumental music, singing, and sacrifices. All of Israel participated, from the youngest to the oldest.

These festivals included Passover (Exod 12; 23:15; 34:18, 25; Lev 23:5-8; Num 9:1-14; 28:16-25; Deut 16:1-8; Ezek 45:21-24), the Feast of Weeks (Exod 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:15-21; Num 28:26-31; Deut 16:9-10), the Feast of Booths (Exod 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:33-36; Num 28: 12-39; Deut 16:13-18), and the Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:23-25; Num 29: 1-6). The purpose

"It seems to me today that learning how to be God's people has become less a joining in with community, and more a gathering of age-segregated groups to study about being God's people."

of these festivals was to remind the Israelites of who they were, who God was, and what God had done for these, his people, in ages past. As children and teens danced, sang, ate, listened to the stories, and asked

questions, they came to know who they were and who they were to be. And their knowing would carry the sense of the Hebrew word *yada'* which connotes more than intellectual information, but rather knowing by experiencing (Fretheim, 1997, p. 410).

In these settings, God clearly expected the older generation to be available to the younger to answer questions and to explain. For example, in Exodus 12: 27, God says, "And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them. . . ." Many times throughout the Old Testament, this phrase is used, "And when your children ask" But if we are not with our children participating in religious/spiritual activities together, we will not be there when they ask. We will not be there to answer.

It seems to me today that learning how to be God's people has become less a joining in with community, and more a gathering of age-segregated groups *to study about* being God's people. As I began looking at the way young Jewish children were assimilated into their culture I began wondering

why we don't do it that way - and why we do it differently. Perhaps we have simply followed a schooling model of Christian education and have not considered other alternatives. Perhaps we simply do not know what an intergenerational model of Christian education might look like.

Intergenerational Small Groups

One way to provide intergenerational Christian experiences is to meet in small groups with all ages present. It is not the only way, as mentioned earlier. But it is an excellent way. The children from intergenerational churches in my research attended intergenerational small groups on a regular basis. What follows is a description of some of the types of IG activities in which they participated.

Icebreakers

A common activity in IG small groups is the icebreaker. A question is asked to which all (adults and children) respond. An icebreaker recently in a group was: *What are you afraid of?* Some of the responses were:

- . . . gaining too much weight in my pregnancy . . .
- . . . that I will die young like my dad did . . .
- . . . that I won't be able to finish my thesis . . .
- . . . that I won't pass fourth grade . . .
- . . . that my cancer will return . . .
- . . . that Ben won't get his parole . . .

Then it was Jeremy's turn. Jeremy is a second grader. He put his head on his arm and began to cry, and he said in a small, jerking voice, "I'm afraid to go to sleep because I have nightmares." One of the dads in the group immediately came over to Jeremy and put his arm around his shoulders. He held him for a minute, then prayed with him and over him, that God would take away the nightmares. Then one of the older elementary girls in the group came over and said to Jeremy, "You know, Jeremy, I used to have nightmares, but I prayed to God and he took them away." A mother in the group said "I was reading the Psalms last night and I found a scripture for you, Psalm 4:8, 'I go to bed and sleep in peace. Lord, you keep me safe.'"

This story illustrates the kind of intergenerational ministry that can and does happen even in the lightweight part of the evening, the icebreaker. Of course, often the icebreaker is light and fun, such as "What did you enjoy most at the Fourth of July fireworks celebration?" Regardless of the depth of the icebreaker, the children, teens, and adults come to know each other's names and enter the lives of one another.

Worship

Most IG groups choose to worship and praise God together in song. Sometimes a child chooses the songs; sometimes a child leads the songs. Sometimes a parent and his/her child will have chosen the songs together. The praise time may last a few minutes or a half an hour, depending upon such factors as the song leaders' choices, the spirit of the group, or the needs of the evening. Sometimes the praise time turns into a time of lament if some or many in the group are suffering difficult times.

In one group, after we had finished singing "Jesus, Lamb of God," in the stillness that followed, kindergartner Justin called out in his tiny, high voice, "Can we sing it one more time?" Of course, we did, and we sang it with a new sweetness, knowing anew that Justin was absorbing this beautiful message. Another time our 12-year-old son asked if our group could sing Dennis Jernigan's "While You Sing Over Me." Our family owns a copy of this song on tape, but I had never noticed that he paid any attention when we played it. I certainly didn't know he knew the composer or the name of the song. From that moment on I began to see my son with different eyes. Worshiping together in a close and intimate setting reveals our inner spiritual lives to our children and theirs to us.

Prayer

Most groups do not normally have long periods of prayer while children are present, but during the years we participated in IG small groups we always prayed weekly for each family unit present (singles were counted as a family unit also). I remember one family that was facing a big change. The father, a man in his early forties who had owned his own business for twenty years, had decided to take a job working for someone else. He felt he would be less stressed and have more time for his family and those he cared for in the church. We had prayed for him as adults for some weeks as he was making the decision, but as the family entered the transition time, we prayed together for the whole family. Later he said that the prayers of the group united his family in this decision and served to bring them closer at a difficult time.

We prayed for all the transitions in our group members' lives - when a child graduated from high school, went to technical school, joined the military forces, got a job, or went to college we prayed for the whole family. When a child entered kindergarten, went to middle school or junior high, or high school, we prayed with and for that child. We knew the children in our small group, and they knew us and our family's needs and transitions. The children learned over a period of time that when a person or family faces something new, the first place to go is prayer.

Intergenerational small groups are one way for children to participate

with persons of all ages as they come to know the Lord their God and as they begin to see themselves as members of their community of faith.

Conclusion

In this twenty-first century, churches are busily, intentionally, proactively separating the generations for worship, sermons, Sunday school, fellowship, almost everything. In fact, in some churches, children are never with their families for any church activities whatsoever. According to church educationists, this is not a good thing.

This article has attempted to provide empirical, theological, and practical support for intergenerational Christian activities. However, I must qualify my support for IG activities in two ways. First, I am *not* advocating that children and adults participate together for all activities of the church. There are important reasons to provide special - and *separate* - teaching time for preschool children, elementary age children, teens, and adults; developmental and life stage issues must be considered. My second caveat is related to the first. I have not abandoned my desire to teach biblical facts to children. I still believe that Bible stories, the books of the Bible, Bible verses, the Ten Commandments, days of creation, and the fruit of the spirit are important to know. Age-based Sunday schools provide a crucial function. Memory verses that we learn as children feed and nurture us all the days of our lives; biblical facts we learn create familiar pathways down which we walk as we begin to construct a mature theology; basic biblical truths we learn provide the theological foundation upon which we stand as we negotiate deeper Bible study that nourishes our souls and builds our faith over the years. In other words, the time spent in age-based classes can be valuable, constructive time. All Christian experiences need not be intergenerational.

However, we need to carve out times to experience religious, spiritual activities with the children in our churches. And our children need to be privy to our experiences in the body of Christ. They need to be participating in the spiritual lives of those in their community of faith.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), educational psychologists, have conducted some research on apprenticeships that sheds some light on the learning process that happens in intergenerational experiences. They examined five ethnographic studies of specific apprenticeship situations: midwives, tailors, quartermasters, meat cutters, and non-drinking alcoholics. They then drew principles from these apprenticeships that can be applied to other social learning settings, such as IG experiences: 1) apprentices are guided and supervised by masters, 2) masters teach by showing the apprentice how to do a task (modeling), and then helping them as they try to do it on

their own (coaching and fading), 3) the apprentice derives identity from becoming a part of the community of workers, and 4) productive apprenticeship depends on opportunities for the apprentice to participate legitimately in the activities to be learned.

Apprenticeship learning does at least two things: 1) it forges a person who now identifies with the community of practice, and 2) it creates an environment where “knowing is inherent in the growth and transformation of identities and it is located in relations among practitioners, their practice, the artifacts of that practice, and the social organization . . . of the community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 122).

In some ways intergenerational Christian education is an apprenticeship. The children - the apprentices - are guided and supervised by masters who model “tasks,” prayer, ministry, worship; the apprentices - the children - have opportunities to participate legitimately in the activities to be learned. This kingdom apprenticeship forges a person to come to identify with the community of practice. As Lave and Wenger (1991) state, “The *person* has been correspondingly transformed into a practitioner, a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skills, and discourse are part of a developing identity - in short, a member of a community of practice” (p. 122).

The goal of Christian education has always been to grow persons of faith who identify with and participate as members of faith communities. Intergenerational Christian experiences provide rich opportunities for this to happen. Children learn from each other, younger children, older children, teenagers, and adults. And adults learn from each other, teenagers and children. All benefit from each other in an intergenerational mutuality known as the body of Christ, the church - our community of practice. —LEJ

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Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, and Children's Spiritual Experiences

Steven A. Katz

Introduction

The number of children, especially boys, identified as having a learning disability (LD) and/or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) has skyrocketed over the last decade. From 1990 to 2000, the number of students receiving special education grew by 30%. School enrollment grew by only 14% in the same period (ERIC, 2001). Predictably, these children are also entering our Lutheran schools, Sunday schools, confirmation classes, youth groups and other Christian education activities for spiritual formation.

Historically, the Christian church provided a ministry for those with developmental disabilities (mental retardation). Even now, suggestions for the developmentally disabled and Christian education are easy to access through agencies such as Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services of Watertown, Wisconsin (2000-2003). (See also Trent, Osborne, & Bruner, 2000).

Unfortunately, the available resources for Christian educators working with those youth identified as having a learning disability and/or ADD has not kept up with their increase in the general population. The major exception is the Lutheran Special Education Ministries Services (2002), a recognized service organization affiliated with The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). Its programs and services include: evaluation, consultation, student instructional support and basic student instructional services. These are available to all Christian denominations. This special education ministry also places teachers of the learning disabled in Lutheran schools.

The purpose of this article is to give descriptions of attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities with an emphasis on those behaviors that Christian educators might observe in Sunday schools, confirmation classes, outdoor education and Lutheran school classrooms. Suggestions for educators will follow the descriptors. Finally, six extended practical suggestions that cross disability lines are given.

Attention Deficit Disorder

In America about two million school-aged students are diagnosed with and receive treatment for an attention deficit disorder of some kind. An estimated 3 to 9% of school aged children have ADD. The number of American children diagnosed and medicated for ADD more than tripled in the 1990s (News from CHADD, 2003). Diagnosed boys outnumber girls by a ratio of up to 10:1 (Barkley, 2000; Intelihealth, 2002; Tanner & Hammer, 1998). Girls may be under-identified because they tend not to have the hyperactivity component.

The most common signs of ADD are impulsive behavior and a tendency to be distracted or inattentive. If these behaviors are accompanied by hyperactivity then the condition is known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Tanner & Hanmer, 1998, U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1994). The Christian educator might encounter the following behaviors in children with ADHD:

- Frequent mistakes in school work or other activities
- Difficult time sustaining attention in tasks of play
- Not following through on instructions
- Often loses things
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to stay seated
- Fidgets and squirms with hands or feet
- Often talks excessively
- Frequently interrupts others
- Difficulty waiting in lines

(Learning Disabilities OnLine, 2003; U.S Dept. of Ed., 1994)

The foregoing characteristics appear in all children at one time or another. However, for the child with ADD or ADHD they begin to appear before seven years of age, persist over at least six months, are not age appropriate, are not due to other causes, i.e., anxiety, family disruption, depression, and occur in different settings. The signs must occur across settings, e.g. not just in confirmation class. For diagnostic criteria in detail, one can consult the *Diagnostic and Statistical Yearbook IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Children with ADD or ADHD do not lack intelligence as measured by an IQ test. They are not unable to learn, they are just unavailable to learn because of their impassivity, distractibility and feeling “driven”.

It may be helpful to think of these children in terms of the cartoon character who is the quintessence of ADHD - Dennis the Menace. He is a male whose best friend is Joey, several years younger than he is. Dennis loves the unconditional acceptance of his dog, Ruff. Although Alice and Henry, his parents, love him they are also exasperated by his escapades. Dennis completely misunderstands the figures of speech used by Mr. Wilson, the curmudgeon next door. When Mr. Wilson tells Dennis to “beat it,” Dennis returns pounding a large drum. At the same time, it is evident that Dennis understands his conditions when he makes statements like, “It’s not that I am good at being bad, it is just that I’m bad at being good” or “Before I think I shouldn’t do it, I’ve already done it.”

Working With Those Diagnosed as ADD or ADHD

First of all, the adult must remember that the haphazard, poorly organized and non goal directed activity of these children and teens is not willful and intentional (Intelihealth, 2002). Indeed, these individuals are often truly contrite about their misbehavior.

A youth program or a sports team at the church may be a highlight of a teen’s week, whether ADD or not. Unfortunately, children with ADHD (and learning disabilities) often lack the social skills that permit them to make friends and to participate. It may be necessary to “tutor” the child in proper social behavior (LDOOnline, n.d.).

If the parents and school have set up a behavior management program, it may be appropriate to follow the same program at church. Ask the parents what works best with their child. (See also general suggestion number two at the end of this article).

It is crucial to discuss any medication with parents. Sometimes parents take their children off the medication for the weekend. If the child is on medication, as the dose wears off, the child may become more hyperactive. Those who work with the child need to be aware of this possibility. If planning an overnight activity, keep in mind that children with ADHD often have difficulty falling asleep and may require only a few hours of sleep per night. They also may have little appetite. At no time should the child be reminded in public to take his medications.

Before undertaking an activity, go through the procedure first, demonstrate as necessary, and get frequent feedback from the students to check their comprehension. The response may be written, verbal, a role-play, or a demonstration.

If the student is hyperactive and can monitor his/her own activity level, several strategies may be useful:

- Seat the child in the front of a class so it is easy to focus on the instructor
- Seat the child in the back of the class so he can move at will without disturbing others
- Allow the child two chairs in separate places in the room, so she can move about
- Have the child sit away from doors or windows to lessen the distraction
- Surround him with good role models
- Give her a small card, one side yellow, one side green. When the yellow card is displayed it means, she feels “hyper” but is controlling the urge to move, the green side indicates she is going to move about appropriately
- Provide the student an “office” (study carrel) in which to work
- Try lowering the lighting, use natural light if possible, play soothing music
- Use a “secret” signal with a child to draw him back to the activity
- A tap on the shoulder or a tap on the desk or chair may help to bring her back to the lesson

As warranted, the child with ADHD may be made the teacher’s “assistant” and thus engage in movement such as passing papers, setting up the room, turning on the video, etc. The child may be given a small ball to squeeze unobtrusively to channel some of the excess energy, he may be provided with a small sponge on which to tap his pencil.

When the child displays inappropriate behavior, tell the child what you want him to do, not what you don’t want him to do. Try to give him a replacement activity for the wrong one. When giving directions, be specific. Being subtle does not work. Children with ADD do not operate on insight, but on impulse.

As the Christian educator delivers instruction, these guidelines will help:

- Maintain eye contact during verbal instruction
- Directions should be clear and concise, be consistent
- Avoid multiple commands
- Give extra time if needed
- As possible, lessen stress, pressure, and fatigue.

Do not use “lecturettes.” The child has heard it all before. He will usually wait until you are through, then give you the answer you want to hear. Children with ADD do not guide their life by long term plans. Similarly, do not use long-term rewards for good behavior. Rewards at the end of the month or even at the end of the week are usually too far off. The student does not tie present behavior to future consequences, positive or negative. The more immediate the reward the better (TSMedia, 1995).

Avoid ridicule, criticism and sarcasm - as you would with all children. Although they may appear tough and uncaring on the outside, they are often extremely fragile on the inside. Be honest with praise, this group of children has an uncanny ability to ferret out “fakes”.

Since the whole family may be involved in church activities, it is vital to recognize that the child's behavior may cause intense stress in the family unit. The parents may be worn out from the child's intense physical activity. They may also be drained from the constant negative reports from the school and the community. It is not usual for parents to carry a load of guilt about their child's behavior.

There is good reason for parental, church, and community concern.

Over 30% of children with ADHD have committed theft, 20% set serious fires, and more than 40% are early tobacco and alcohol users. Over a quarter of these students are expelled from their schools (Barkley, 2000).

Siblings may feel neglected because of all the attention given to the child with ADHD, they may feel like their sibling's “punching bag” (Lehmann, 2002; Richfield, 2003). School personnel, hopefully not church personnel, may have expectations for the same negative behavior from a sibling as they do for the sister or brother with ADHD. With input from community experts, the church could set up support groups for parents and for siblings.

Learning Disabilities

A learning disability is a “severe discrepancy” between a child's ability and achievement in such areas as reading, writing, and mathematics. (Unfortunately, there is no universal definition of “severe discrepancy”). The child has intact hearing and vision and has average to above average intelligence. Therefore, a learning disability is not the same as a developmental disability (mental retardation). The person with a learning disability can be thought of as having peaks and valleys in his achievement profile. He may be excellent in math, but a very poor reader, for example. She may be able to comprehend written material at grade level, but struggle to put her own thoughts into writing.

About 30 to 40% of those identified as LD are also identified with ADHD. In 2001, 2.9 million students received special education services for learning

disabilities. Of all students identified for special education services, 51% are identified as having learning disabilities (Silver, 2002).

Reading is the most common area affected (SchwabLearning.org, 2003). Boys are identified about five times more frequently than girls are. Students with a learning disability often do poorly in team sports. They usually favor individual sports. These children may also have low self-esteem because they have been told for years that they are lazy, or that they should try harder when they are trying as hard as they can.

For those involved in spiritual formation, the child with a learning disability may present themselves in the following ways:

- The elementary child comprehends the book read to him, but is unable to supply the rhyming word at the end of a sentence, such as in the popular *Arch* books.
- A usually well-behaved upper elementary child begins to act out when ever it is his turn to read; he often gets teased about his poor reading. (Almost any child would rather be seen as bad rather than dumb).
- The teenager can calculate costs quickly and accurately for the next retreat, but stumbles painfully when reading a few Bible verses.
- The middle schooler speaks in front of large groups fluently, but when asked write down her thoughts produces a brief, barely legible paper of disjointed sentences.

As with ADD or ADHD, a learning disability is not something that children usually “grow out” of. Therefore, the forthcoming suggestions given for both conditions are not aimed at “curing” or remediating the problem, but rather accommodating to it. As noted above there is a large overlap with ADD and LD, therefore some of the suggestions are applicable in both situations.

Suggestions for Learning Disabilities

A learning disability is sometimes called the “invisible disability”. However, this does not make it any less real or problematic. The direct route is best: ask the students the best way to accommodate their learning disability. Some students may appreciate you asking. Other students want to forget about their LD while at church. In school they may feel “labeled”, weird or retarded. Follow the students’ lead; do not mention the learning disability if they do not. Try to work with their strengths and avoid their weaknesses. At no time should the instructor use sarcasm, “humorous” put-downs or tell jokes that everyone but the child with LD understands.

Before beginning a lesson or activity, there are number of good teaching principles to follow (see the last section of this article, numbers three and four)

- Begin with a review of the last lesson.
- Introduce new words and terms before the lesson, such as “justification” or “atonement”. Use them in a simple sentence. Review the new words at the end of the lesson.
- Tie concepts, ideas, bits of history to the “real world”.
- Remember that the child with LD may need help understanding synonyms, for example, that “host”, “bread”, and “wafer” all refer to the same element.
- It is better to stick to one term to avoid confusion, e. g., Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, Sacrament of the Altar, Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion, etc.
- It may be necessary to explain humor and figures of speech, e. g., “be the light of the world”, “descendants as numerous as the grains of sand”

During the lesson or activity, whether formal or informal, there are a number of strategies that may help the child with a learning disability and very possibly other children as well.

- Use overheads and/or power point to illustrate concepts and ideas, in addition to talking about them.
- Put only a few points on each overhead or slide so the students are not overwhelmed and become discouraged.
- Use lines, boxes, or grids to divide the material into parts.
- Give the students the same lines, boxes, or grids to fill in.
- Use guided notes; part of the presentation outline is filled in, and the students only need to fill in random words or phrases instead of taking notes.

When a student is called upon, allow five seconds for response time. Students with LD often have a slower response time than others. Some students may wish to tape record a lesson for later review. Sometimes a “study buddy” can be selected to help the student with LD to keep track of the lesson and stay organized. The buddy may take notes so the person with LD can concentrate on listening and watching (Lerner, 2003; Modolfsky, n.d.).

If oral reading is required, the following can be used to help the student with a reading disability:

- Select a passage that does not contain new and difficult words
- Seat the student next to you, before it is his turn, point to the passage he will need to read
- A week or more ahead of time, allow her to take home the passage to practice
- Allow the student to practice with you before class
- Allow all students the option to “pass” on oral reading
- Choose only volunteers to read orally, but check the comprehension of all

General Suggestions

Because of the co-morbidity existing between learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity, there are general suggestions that can be used with both populations. Since “good teaching is good teaching is good teaching,” many of these suggestions are useful with non-disabled children as well.

1. It is the person first, then the disability.

The learning disability and/or ADD should be viewed as a small part of the student, not the defining characteristic. The young person is not an LD child; rather he is a child with a learning disability. Similarly, she is not ADD; she is a child with ADD. Common speech should reflect this fact.

2. Ask upfront about necessary accommodations.

Before the school year begins, confirmation classes start, a youth activity commences, etc. it is good practice to inquire about any special needs. These needs may be anything from a severe allergy to peanut butter, to a profound disability in mathematics or reading. The request regarding special needs should be part of any written materials about the activity. The request should also be made orally. Parents may be contacted individually if their child attends a public school, to see if there is an individual educational plan (IEP) for the child that might contain helpful information about accommodations.

It is a good idea to simply ask the child, in private of course, how you might be able to accommodate a learning disability or attention deficit. If the teen responds with the typical middle school shoulder shrug or, “Idonknow”, you can inquire, “Tell me about some things that happen in school to make learning easier for you”. The worst scenario is “the elephant in the living room” where, like the proverbial elephant, the disability is evident to all, but no one

will acknowledge its existence, much less discuss what to do about it.

3. Good teaching is good teaching is good teaching

As referenced earlier in this article, some specific accommodations can be made for those children with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. At the same time, there are general principles of effective teaching that will assist all children.

- Use VAT. Instruct children through the visual, auditory, and tactile (touch). Most students have a preferred modality. By using VAT, you can be sure to address their strength.
- Be organized. Start and end on time. Have all materials prepared. Provide consistent well-marked containers for any student materials. Transition quickly from one activity to another, but never without a warning that the activity will change.
- Be specific. Tell participants the purpose of the lesson or activity upfront. Demonstrate the skill. Relate the purpose to “real life”; the less abstract the better. Debrief (review) at the end to help the students retain the purpose.
- Provide safety and hope. Any child should feel emotionally and physically safe in your presence. Structure, routine, and control provide a sense of safety (creativity may occur within the structure). Bullying, physical confrontations, and put-downs should not be allowed. Children with learning disabilities and/or ADD are easy targets. Sarcasm from the leader (teacher) is not acceptable (Bender, 2004).

Many children with ADD and/or LD have great difficulty with non-structured activities or not knowing what's on the schedule. Therefore, always write down a schedule for the class, the evening activities, the day at camp, etc. Then go over the schedule orally. Refer to the schedule frequently so children can “keep their place.”

Cross off scheduled activities as they are completed. For younger children pictures can be used. For the child who needs constant reassurance, a small individual schedule can be provided. In extreme cases, constant access to a timepiece may be required (Bender, 2004; Lerner, 2003).

4. Orient in time and space.

While the terms “space cadet” or “lost in space” are often used humorously, many young people, some with ADD or LD, are often disoriented in

time and space. It is surprising how many middle schoolers cannot name the months of the year in order. Or given a day of the week, are unable to tell the day before and the day after. A number of teens have not mastered the physical layout of their school and simply follow friends from class to class. The same disorientation is probably true at camps and in large church facilities.

Every space where children regularly gather should have a large calendar; one that displays the entire year is ideal. The instructor needs to point out, write down, and discuss current and upcoming events, paying special attention to the time intervals. Unless literally pointed to, some students may not grasp that two weeks is 14 days. Frequent print and oral reminders about due dates may be necessary. It may be necessary to individually “tutor” some students in calendar use.

It is reasonable to ask teens to use the same assignment book used in their middle or high school for church events. This gives the youth a more complete overview of their schedules. It may be a good outreach for the church to provide assignments books for each teen, such as the Good News assignment book published by Creative Communications for the Parish (2001).

In a similar vein, map skills should be taught, or at least reviewed, for any outdoor education activity. A map detailing a large church’s facility is also a good idea. It is easy to make these learning activities into games. The child with LD or ADD may need some one-on-one instruction to learn map-reading skills.

Using road maps and/or city maps, teams of youth can be challenged to find the route that is the quickest, most direct, or most scenic to a camp, another church, a youth activity destination etc. Map reading of hotel layouts and cities should be stressed whenever teens and leaders go to national youth gatherings or similar functions.

Map reading skills and being oriented in time will also be used in Bible study, for example, with timelines of Old Testament events and the missionary journeys of Paul.

For those children who have a poor sense of time, always give warnings before the end of an activity or lesson: “You have five minutes left”, “We’ll end this activity in two minutes.” Setting kitchen timers may be helpful.

5. Teach the hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum is Richard Lavoie’s term (1994) for those social skills that most children “just learn”; such as where to sign a birthday card, to check available cash before ordering a meal, or how to ask for directions when lost.

Unfortunately, children with LD and /or ADHD may have to be taught skills directly. These skills may even include adult pleasing skills such as: main-

tain eye contact, don't interrupt, don't just walk away, do apologize when appropriate.

It is necessary for the leader to keep an eye out for those students who are always at the fringe of activities, who don't "get" age appropriate jokes or riddles or don't seem to understand how to participate in games their agemates find enjoyable. These students may need an adult or "peer buddy" to tutor them in a particular social skill.

6. Avoid metaphors.

Whether students are diagnosed with ADHD, as LD, or both, figures of speech are often lost on them. The example of Dennis the Menace in the first part of the article illustrates this. Expressions such as "hungry as a horse" or "red as a beet" may be taken literally; in fact, the student may tell you why a figure of speech cannot be true. A beet is not actually red, after all. A student may have strange images when an instructor uses the term "brainwash". As one of these students, "What do you think it was like to be in the disciple's shoes?" You may get the very honest, but innocent answer, "That's impossible they wore sandals, not shoes!"

Conclusion

The number of children identified with special needs increased dramatically in the last decade. The children and their families present special challenges when they enter our faith communities for spiritual formation.

This article described two of the most common special needs, attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities. Suggestions to accommodate these two areas were detailed. The hope is that those involved in spiritual formation will use, modify, and expand upon these suggestions and employ them prayerfully for all of God's children. —LEJ

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Puzzle Peace: Nurturing the Spirituality of Children

Salter-McNeil

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.” — Isaiah 11:6

I discovered the truth of the foregoing scripture verse when my son, Omari, was in fourth grade at Grace Lutheran School. One day, when I was visiting his school, I learned from his teacher that he was very proud of the work I do and bragged about me in class. He told his teacher that I traveled all over the country speaking and training college students about racial reconciliation on college and university campuses. She was intrigued and asked if I could do racial reconciliation training with her fourth grade class. I was surprised by her request and stammered, “Yes.” At the time I thought I could make the training I do relevant to fourth graders, but as the day grew closer for me to do the training I got nervous. How could I make such a difficult subject as racial reconciliation and ethnic diversity relevant and interesting to fourth grade children? How could I help them to grasp such complex concepts as racism, ethnocentrism, and reconciliation? As I agonized over these questions, the idea came to me to use a puzzle! I would use a puzzle as a metaphor to demonstrate how people who are different need each other and why they should come together. So I grabbed one of my childrens’ puzzles and went off to train my son’s 4th grade class.

When I arrived, I put the puzzle in a brown paper bag and let each child choose a random piece. I asked each child to examine the piece they had chosen very carefully. As I asked them questions to help them analyze the piece they had chosen, I noticed that some children had started to huddle together around one desk in the back of the room. They were calling for different classmates to add their pieces of the puzzle. When it dawned on me that they were already putting the puzzle together, I asked them to tell me what they were doing. They said, very matter-of-factly, that they were putting the puzzle together. I asked them why they were doing this since I hadn’t told them what to do yet. They looked kind of surprised at my ignorance and said that they just knew that a puzzle had to be put together. No one had to tell them to put it together. One little girl said, “It doesn’t make sense unless we put it together.” Someone else

said, "We wanted to see the big picture. You can't get that from one piece." I thought to myself, "Oh my goodness, these children get it! They understand!" And then Isaiah 11:6 came to my heart and mind: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them."

There was something in these children that knew instinctively that if they wanted to see the big picture and understand the deeper meaning they would have to come together. So without anybody telling them to - Black and White, Hispanic and Asian, male and female - they quietly and methodically came together and assembled the entire puzzle. They knew that one puzzle piece by itself is useless - it was made to be connected.

The Struggle With Diversity

This story is extremely meaningful to me because I know of the struggle many children have dealing with racial and ethnic diversity in schools like Grace Lutheran. In fact, as an African-American parent I was very apprehensive about sending my own children to Grace Lutheran School because I was afraid for what might happen to their racial identity and positive self-esteem. I knew of other children of color who attended Grace who struggled to fit in and feel accepted. One such student captured her feelings in a poem entitled, "How to Feel Loved While Facing 3rd Grade Racism" (Smith, 2003, pp. 13-17). She writes:

*I stand in the doorway
peer in upon my distant classmates
teacher pays little attention
administration gives no consideration
to my singularity among white faces
that stare back
blank*

*many of them German, Lutheran
their race and religion go hand-in-hand,
tradition
my Daddy says we're Pentecostal
I'm not sure what that means,
but I know we're not like them*

*so hard to relate
sometimes can't even concentrate
on my studies
first few months
a single buddy named Margie*

*she looks at me like I'm a real girl,
human,
not black
we are both kinda different
her house is smaller and my skin is browner than the other kids
yet alike in our love for song,
courage to dance the bunny hop in front of everyone just because we feel like it,
and of course, our "vertical challenge"*

*one day a bunch of us are in the bathroom gabbing away
when race comes up
someone says something about black people
and my skin becomes extra obvious again
the contrast of brown against white makes me burn from inside
though my outer color now shivers
I get that horrible anxious feeling like something is about to die
and for no apparent reason
my Margie calls me the n-word*

*she says it playfully
but big old words like those hit hard
knock the wind from my gut
make me smaller, uglier, less than others
Margie knows all this,
but only gives me a nervous smile
she claims she is sorry
and I don't believe it*

*but I have to forgive her, she didn't mean to hurt me
she is my friend
I have to play it off,
everyone states back at me
blank
I have to let it go because I am a Christian
and that's what our Jesus did, right?*

*but it's hard to think of others when they
don't think you're like them
I've got 2 sisters down the hall
one in 1st the other in 5th grade,
so close yet too far away for me to touch them
explain to them
have someone understand that it hurts even when kids say nothing
just more so when they use
that word to describe me
confine me
in public bathrooms
they all file out, but I am still trapped here, speechless
so I sing*

*raise my little voice and sing
pretend it doesn't hurt
until it really doesn't hurt
'cause that's what my ancestors did
and that's all I can do
this ain't no cotton field
but light pink bathroom stalls will have to do
my back is still bent over
and this whole body aches*

*my throat gets tight with words so hot
when the tears won't come
can't come 'cause they leave my eyes bloodshot
with clear streaks down my chubby cheeks
and my body can't control it
clenched fist won't hold it
my voice may carry all the way to our class if I scream
then they see me like this and start staring again*

*So I choose to feel happy
Choose to feel loved
Not by them
But always by Him
For Him,
I sing!*

*Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to him belong
They are weak but he is strong
Yes Jesus loves me,
Yes Jesus loves me,
Yes Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so*

*Jesus loves me he who died
Heaven's gates to open wide
He will wash away my sin
Let his little child come in
Yes Jesus loves me,
Yes Jesus loves me,
Yes Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so*

That day in my son's 4th grade class I learned that children instinctively want to connect with others. On some level they understand that as human beings we're made to be connected. As people made in the image of God we were made to be in relationship with others. An aspect of the image of God has been deposited in every person and every people group. That means that we cannot fully know God or see the big picture of who God is apart from each

other - we have to come together. That's why children are so confused when they watch adults live segregated and isolated from other people. One little girl named Nan summed up her confusion in a letter to God when she said, "Dear God, "Do you draw the lines around the countries? If you don't, who does?"

Prejudice is Taught

Children are naturally openhearted - they are honest and transparent. I believe that this openness of being is what it really means to be fully human. This is the essence of true spirituality - to love God and to embrace all humanity. When children see people of different colors they don't naturally associate value or judgment to the people they see. No! Instead, they are simply describing what they see. I remember learning this as I watched my daughter Mia when she was two or three years old. In an attempt to describe the differences she saw in people she would refer to colors in her crayon box. She would say things like, "That little girl is brown, or that little boy is pink, or my uncle Peter is yellow!" It is only as they are socialized in a racialized society that they learn to be like the adults around them who discriminate and judge people negatively based on the color of their skin and not on the content of their character. Children have to learn to hate. They have to be taught to fear other people and to be prejudiced. It's not innate. Prejudice is contagious. That's what one little boy said when he was explaining how he began to dislike other kids. He said, "Sometimes when the kids single out a person and they start making fun of him, at first I object and I don't take part in it. But then, after a while, I start thinking like them and I laugh, too. Prejudice is contagious." That's exactly what happened to Rachel Smith as she described in her poem her painful experience in the bathroom with other 3rd grade girls. Another child reveals how racism got planted in her heart when she says, "My mother said I can't trust black people. I'm supposed to hate black people. After a while I hated anyone who wasn't my color, and I was a bully all of a sudden."

Maybe it wasn't just all of a sudden. In fact, it takes a long time to teach a child to hate. This lifelong, educational process is aptly captured in the well-known lyrics of the song, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught," from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *South Pacific*.

*You've got to be taught to hate and fear.
You've got to be taught from year to year.
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear.
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.*

*You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate!
You got to be carefully taught!
You got to be carefully taught!*

Many children are learning to hate before they are old enough to even know why. "Every day, in our cities and suburbs, small towns and countryside, in our classrooms and playgrounds and on our streets, our children are experiencing . . . the words and acts of prejudice and their effects, from the most subtle to the most violent" (Anti-Defamation League, Stern-LaRosa, & Bettmann, 2000, p. 3). These are not benign or innocent occurrences. Children who have been the victims of prejudice or who have been taught to hate and fear, often grow up to inflict pain and hurt on other people. I became painfully aware of this harsh reality when a young person who had been taught to hate and fear murdered a dear friend of mine in the summer of 1999. He was a victim of a hate crime - racially motivated violence.

It was July 2, 1999 when I got the phone call from my husband telling me that Ricky Byrdsong had been shot. I could not believe my ears! Ricky was the former head basketball coach at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and he was also a member of our local church. He was a wonderful Christian man who lived in an affluent suburban community on the north shore of Chicago with his wife and three children. On that fateful Friday, the beginning of the 4th of July weekend, he was walking home from the playground with two of his three children. They were just three blocks away from their home when a car with a young, white man - a former college student - a member of a white supremacist, hate group - shot and killed Coach Byrdsong right in front of his children. This shooting spree was motivated by racial hatred and fear and lasted an entire weekend. When it was over, several Jewish people, African Americans, and Asian Americans were injured in nine separate incidences across Illinois and Indiana and Won Joon Yoon - a young Korean graduate student, who was shot while standing outside his Presbyterian church - and Ricky Byrdsong were killed and three innocent children were traumatized and left to mourn the death of their dad.

It's a Heart Problem

They didn't understand it. Who could? It was senseless. Later that year when Ricky's widow, tried to assure her son that he would grow up to be a great

man like his father, Little Ricky replied, "Does that mean I'll get shot too?" Tragically, far too often our children are the ones left to bear the brunt of the sins of our society. Racism and injustice are a cancer on the soul of our nation and a sickness in the souls of people that deeply impacts our children. Social analysis, however brilliant and incisive, may help us understand the problem, but it can never alone solve the problem. Racism and injustice, division and hatred are spiritual problems at the core. That's why in a prepared statement after her husband's death Sherilyn Byrdsong said, "The violent act that took my husband's life is yet another clarion call to our nation. It's time to wake up, America. It's time to turn back to God, to read and obey His word, to put prayer and the Bible back into our schools and daily family living. This is not a gun problem, it's a heart problem, and only God and reading His word can change our hearts."

That is why it is so urgent that we reclaim and nurture the spirituality of our children. As our world is becoming increasingly global and multiethnic, our children are encountering a greater degree of racial and ethnic diversity. As its citizens become younger, and as the United States continues to experience rapid growth in its ethnic populations, we can assume that our children will encounter a greater degree of ethnic diversity and face increased potential for racial and ethnic hostility. It's hard to cope with change and sometimes what we don't understand frightens us and threatens us so we isolate ourselves and move away from it in an attempt to protect and preserve our way of life. But as our children watch us live in isolation and fear, they are learning the lessons that produce prejudice and ethnocentrism, which is often fueled by stereotypes that result from limited exposure and understanding. These attitudes breed the potential for increased racial tension and hostility among our children. Unfortunately, children are experiencing this at very young ages. Listen to the words of some representative children as they express the hurt they have experienced:

"When I first came to this country, I had a problem speaking English correctly. I had an accent and they made fun of it."

Another little girl says:

"They were talking about ice-skating. I was hoping they would ask me to go with them. But they said, 'She can't ice-skate, she's Chinese.' (Well, I'm actually Korean, but they thought I was Chinese.) I bet I was probably better at skating than them - I was in-group skating for two years. But they said, 'Chinese don't like sports. They don't want to go out. All they want to do is school. They want to look good in front of teachers.'"

And yet another child says:

“These two girls came along and they, like, pushed me out of the way. They just have these moods where one day they, like, really feel like beating somebody up, so they find a white girl who’s walking around and they do.”

These attitudes and behaviors, if left uncorrected, are at the core of the heart problems that lead to racial hostility and ethnic violence. I believe this sickness of the heart is at the root of the recent terrorist attacks that have taken place in our country and around the world; and in the growing domestic tensions developing between whites and blacks, Jews and Muslims, Latinos and blacks, and various Middle Eastern and Asian communities. This is the world that our children are inheriting and we must prepare them to live differently in it. They do not have to repeat the sins of their mothers and fathers. As parents, caregivers, teachers and ministers of children we must turn the tide on the hatred and the violence and teach our children to be citizens of the world - to have hearts that embrace diversity, to have a spirituality that values and respects the sacredness of all human beings. However, there is a problem because we cannot lead children where we ourselves will not go. Perhaps that is why scripture says, “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.”

Ambassadors of Reconciliation

Each time we encourage and teach children to open their hearts and live as children of God, we help them to reclaim their spirituality. They become collaborators with God in bringing his Kingdom to earth. This reign of God as described in Revelation 7:9 is where human beings from “every nation, tribe, people and language” gather together before the throne and worship the Lamb of God. I am convinced that God is at work in the lives of our children and youth preparing them for this reality. I believe that he is igniting a passion for racial and ethnic reconciliation in this generation. What adults have not been able to do to bring healing and wholeness to our world I believe that God is going to use children to do in a radical, unconventional, strategic and powerful way! I believe that the children are the future and they will become the Reconciliation Generation. Some children are already becoming ambassadors of reconciliation. One little girl brought healing to herself and her classmates when she discovered that she was a person of the world. She said:

“I am a browned-skinned girl, a mixture of Spanish, Japanese, and Filipino, who was born in San Francisco. When I started kindergarten, my family lived right in the city and my classmates were of all different colors and cultures. We all got

along. In first grade, I moved to the suburbs, and suddenly everyone but me was white. The kids in my class teased me and kept asking me what I was. Finally, I asked my mom, 'What am I?' "My mom said, 'You are cosmopolitan - a person of the world.' I went back to school and told my classmates, I am a cosmopolitan. That means I am a person of the world.' My classmates were impressed that I knew such a big word. They stopped teasing me and started treating me with respect. Maybe they wanted to be cosmopolitans, too."

And a little child shall lead them! God is at work using the youngest and most unlikely ambassadors of reconciliation. This was never more clear to me than when I had the privilege to speak at the International Network of Children's Ministries last year. At the end of my message, a young woman came up to me and shared how God had used a baby to bring racial reconciliation to her family. Her grandfather, who was a staunch racist, was converted to Christ and repented of his racism when her sister adopted a bi-racial baby. The grandfather wanted to hate the baby but couldn't because after holding the baby he realized that this child was just as precious as any other. Wow! How incredible! God used a baby to lead an old man to Christ and to heal him of the sin and sickness of racism.

I now understand the very valuable role children can play in bringing racial reconciliation to our world. I commend those of you who minister to children. I also challenge you to continue to nurture the true spirituality of children. Help them to love God and other people. Encourage them to really believe that "Jesus loves the little children; all the children of the world; Red and Yellow, Black and White, They are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world." Teach them how to embrace the humanity of all God's people with a genuine openness of being.

It is my prayer that God will bless all of you who are helping children to reclaim their spirituality. Through you God is making this world a better place - a place where "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them." —*LEJ*

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*"Bless all those who nurture children,
sharing knowledge, showing love,
who by faithful words and actions
lead young lives to God above!*

*Bless all those whose voice and presence,
Deep devotion, dignity,
motivate the church to reverence
Guiding Christ's community!*

*Jesus taught both by example and
With words of lasting worth;
Christ has given ways to sample
Hints of heaven here on earth!
In the same way Christian teachers
Model true humanity,
Demonstrating in their witness
Glimpses of eternity!*

*Bless these lives of dedication—
Days and seasons, weeks and years,
Spent in serving congregations,
Spreading joys and soothing tears!*

*Bless these lives so firmly planted
In the grace the Savior brings,
Flourishing as God has granted,
Soaring high on Spirit wings!*

— John A Dalles

The principal walks slowly down the hallway, taking in the sights and sounds of the classrooms. She overhears the fifth grade teacher's explanation of least common multiples. The subject of discussion in the room next door is predicate nominatives. The students in Ms. Smith's class across the hallway are presenting their speeches. The second graders down the hall are immersed in reading class, and the kindergartners are enjoying recess.

Things seem to be going well. The students are doing what they're supposed to be doing, and the teachers are doing what they're supposed to be doing. But the principal is struck by a haunting thought. Is this really what the school is supposed to be doing? She wonders what should really be happening in school. She returns to her office and the tasks awaiting her. Yet, the question lingers. What is the primary purpose of school? Her counterparts around the world occasionally ask themselves the same question.

The question is a tough one. It's the kind of question that is more easily answered in the negative – what the primary purpose of schools isn't.

It's commonly understood that schools have to be more than dispensers of information. The purpose of schools is not to prepare students for game shows. Facts can be important, but they can also be easily forgotten. Some studies have shown that only about five percent of information passed along from teachers to students is retained after six weeks. "Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten," is the way B. F. Skinner put it. Facts only take on importance when they can be related in context to larger issues.

Similarly, a primary function of schools is not to teach students how to score well on standardized tests, or to get accepted into colleges, or to get a job.

And, despite the highly competitive nature of society, the function of each school is not to give its students advantages over students from other schools. As Meier observes, "They do not exist primarily to give each individual student a better chance to beat out other individual students in the race to succeed." (Meier, 2003, p. 16)

Schools have a higher calling. It has been suggested that minimally, the purpose of schools is to pass on to the next generation the things that the present generation values. In a fast changing world, there exists a body of beliefs and ethics that can't be allowed to change. But schools also need to go beyond merely continuing the status quo. Schools need to help students develop new approaches that will benefit future generations.

"Schools need to produce people who are honorable and honest—people who will become strong members of their communities."

It makes sense that schools within a democracy have the responsibility to create a sense of civic responsibility. Schools need to produce people who are honorable and honest — people

who will become strong members of their communities.

Yet, schools must be still more than the above for its students. Schools need to give their students the ability and the desire to keep learning for a lifetime. The object of education is to prepare people to educate themselves.

In his book *Learning by Heart*, Roland Barth states, "If the first major purpose of a school is to create and provide a culture hospitable to human learning, the second major purpose of a school is to make it likely that students and educators will become and remain lifelong learners." (Barth, 2001, p.18)

This greater calling to which schools must accede also involves teaching students how to think, how to probe, how to reflect, how to solve problems, how to use resources, and how to communicate.

Good schools consistently offer students a variety of experiences in problem solving, doing projects, working cooperatively, and doing hands-on activities. They allow students to choose new directions in learning as they discover things in their own areas of interest. They transfer to their students the joy of learning and the desire to keep learning apart from school. They don't concern themselves as much with grades and scores and covering a prescribed set of materials.

Schools bear a heavy burden in helping students become all they can be. But it's also incumbent upon schools to help children realize their responsibilities to others – to love, to care, and to serve. The schools that render the greatest gift are the ones that engender within their students compassion toward others. Schools that are instruments of the Holy Spirit as they help young people to live out their faith through actions of kindness to others are the ones that are truly helping their students.

The principal will continue her daily walks in the hallways, observing as she goes. She'll continue to be nagged by the recurring question of whether or not her school is really doing what it's supposed to be doing. And so will principals everywhere. That's the nature of the profession. Principals never know for sure if what they're doing is ultimately best for the students, but they keep working in the faith that their efforts are not in vain. —*LEJ*

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Today's Lutheran Educator: No Teacher Left Behind

Jonathan C. Laabs, Ed.D.

The presidential candidates in the United States are at it again. Every four years, the individuals who have been identified as front runners for their party's selection at a national convention begin to identify the issues that face Americans. Though not always in sync with the priorities of all citizens, one topic that consistently appears is education. That should be no surprise. This country was founded with the belief that education is essential for the growth and development of its people. It is, in fact, the key ingredient in the success of all cultures and countries worldwide.

A considerable amount of emphasis during the most recent administration has been placed on the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), arguably the most significant educational law in a generation. More than just another speed bump in the road of "school reform", NCLB has captured the attention of policy-makers, educators, parents, and communities like few other initiatives in recent memory. Despite the growing debates surrounding administration of the Act (including some harsh fiscal concerns) and a number of its operational components, it has placed significantly more emphasis on an area that has too often lost focus: the educational performance of all children. For that, NCLB is to be commended and supported.

Among the key provisions of No Child Left Behind are accountability; assistance, sanction, and rewards; curriculum and instruction; and funding streams. For education leaders, these elements are integral to the success of any program. With new focus on student achievement, the potential for improvement in ALL schools for learning by ALL students is enhanced. At the federal, state, and local levels, an enormous amount of time and finances have been placed on these areas. More than ever before, all stakeholders have been involved in determining the best approaches to improving education. However, the most significant of the key provisions has received the least amount of attention: staff quality.

Most emphasis in the area of staff quality at the national level has been placed on the definition of "highly qualified" teachers: those who have qualifications to teach in core academic areas and those who have obtained full state certification or passed the state teacher licensing exam. While these are certainly important elements of quality in teachers – and merit higher priority – edu-

cators in today's schools need and deserve a much higher level of attention and support. Quality teachers are also those who:

- demonstrate commitment to their chosen vocation
- think, act, and communicate as professionals
- value and exercise the need for ongoing professional developing and lifelong learning
- collaborate with fellow educators in a team
- share a common mission, vision and values
- understand and embrace change
- explore new avenues for learning (student and teacher)

These and many other characteristics of quality teachers require support. No national initiative or state-level program is, by itself, going to get to the heart of what teaching is all about. Learning outcomes are measured by the sum total of quality teaching. Academic credentials and certification are indicators of quality in educators, but cannot alone define success. Personal well-being, professional development, attitude, relationship skills, ability to change, and desire to learn are just some of the quality factors that make or break a learning experience. In fact, the degree to which such factors are present may determine whether or not a “qualified” teacher even stays in the profession.

No specific reference has been made thus far to Lutheran educators. That's because everything stated applies to all who call themselves “teacher”: at any level, in any country, in any setting. Educators in Lutheran ministries often forget how much they have in common with millions of colleagues worldwide. The spiritual dimension of what we do is the very reason that everything else deserves to be in order. Teachers require the highest level of support and priority by all who are responsible for quality education. Our ministry, by definition, requires top quality. Those whom we teach deserve no less. —LEJ

This list has been reduced from 20 ways in order to model how we need to cutback on things we do!

We've all read these lists before, right? Me too. Do they actually work? Not necessarily. But they can help to remind us of some healthy habits that we can consider and even practice in our daily lives.

I encourage you to try out some of these hints and ideas to reduce your stress levels. Some of them might actually work! And add some of your own successful habits to the list. Do not be like the educator who got all upset because he paid \$400 for a health club membership and did not lose any weight. Then he discovered that he actually had to show up!

One more emphasis: the bottom line of being well is that we have already been made well ...in Christ Jesus! His death and Resurrection gives us Wellness in Him as a gift! And we continue to be well as the Word and the Sacraments empower us to share our wellness with those around us, in a very unhealthy world!

1. Smile and Laugh a Lot!

Let people continue to wonder why you're so happy! And then tell them. Researchers at Harvard studied 1,300 people for 10 years. They found that those who had the most positive attitudes at the beginning were half as likely to have experienced heart problems as those with more negative attitudes. And they sure were more fun to be around!

2. Rise and Dine.

In a study of 3,900 people, researchers found that those who ate breakfast every day were 44% less likely to be overweight. And energy levels tended to stay longer with these folks throughout the day. Maybe Mother was right after all!

3. Forgive People...Starting with your Self!

Let those guilt feelings go...you are forgiven, in Christ! Pray for forgiveness from someone who you have wronged. And then go to that person and ask for forgiveness. Life is "For Giving"!

4. Stay Away From Smoke.

Researchers in Greece found that individuals who were exposed to cigarette smoke for just 30 minutes three times a week had a 26% greater risk of developing heart disease than people who rarely

encountered secondhand smoke. Thousands of people die each day from smoking-related illnesses!

5. Deal with Depression.

People suffering from depression are more than twice as likely to develop heart disease as those who are not depressed. Duke University researchers found that after just 3 months of treatment, anti-depressants and exercise were equally effective at relieving almost all symptoms of depression. So, why not try to “bike away those blues!”?

6. Meditate 20 Minutes a Day.

A no-brainer perhaps, but do find time to reflect and meditate each day with the Lord. No need to always talk to Him. Why not just listen to Him once in a while? In addition to keeping you close to the Source of wellness, daily meditations tend to reduce anxiety and depression in more than 25% of people tested.

7. Walk the Talk - Literally!

The best exercise is to walk with the Lord. People who walked an extra 4000 - 5000 steps each day lowered their blood pressure by an average of 11 points. Get a pedometer to help you count your daily steps.

8. Join a “Holy Huddle”.

Lonely people have a harder time dealing with stress and are at a greater risk of heart disease than people with a strong support group. People who need people are the luckiest people in the world (Someone should write a song about that sometime!) And the best support group is a Holy Huddle group who support and pray and live in the name of the healing Christ! It’s called the Church!

9. Choose Dark Chocolate!

(I like this one!) Cocoa contains flavonoids that thin the blood and keep it from clotting. And at least a third of the fat in chocolate is oleic acid. Dove dark chocolate bars retain as many flavonoids as possible. Wow, go for it!

10. Wash Your Hands.

German researchers followed 570 people for an average of three years and found that those with the most antibodies (from fighting off infections) in their systems also had the most significant clogging. Use liquid soap, where possible. Wash with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. And do it often.

11. Read, Read, Read!

Swiss researchers found that people who read at least 30 minutes a day lowered their heart rates significantly, reducing their stress levels. Read aloud to the kids, your spouse. Broaden your interests. And be healthier in the process!

12. Play Hard!

Any regular vigorous physical activity reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease, even if for only 10-15 minutes a day. Keep that heart beating!

13. Pray Hard. Play...and Pray...a healthy combination!

Keep connected to the Lord. He's already there! Prayer is a great gift to all of God's people. It keeps us focused and grounded and healthy, too!

14. Eat Oatmeal Cookies!

(Another one I like!) In a Connecticut study, people with high cholesterol who ate oat-bran cookies daily for 8 weeks dropped their levels of LDL cholesterol by more than 20%. And they're yummy too!

15. Tune In ...To Tune Out!

Blood pressure surges in the morning. But, listening to music instead of the news or a raving talk show host can help control it. Keep CD's in your car, in the kitchen, in your office. Blessed be the Sound of Music!

16. Affirm Others.

Catch people "doing things well". . . *and then tell them!* We are reminded in the Scriptures to "Encourage one another", regularly. It's healthy to help others feel good about themselves and the gifts they are sharing with others.

17. Ask for Help!

When people ask us for help, we feel good about it, don't we? We feel that we have something to share, some gifts to give to those around us. And when we ask for help from others, it works for them also. A healthy person, a healthy couple, a healthy staff, are people and groups who ask for help!

18. Remember the Sabbath!

The Sabbath is not just one day a week. It's a healthy life style that helps to balance our relationships with ourselves, our staffs, our families, our communities. A Sabbath style of life acknowledges that the Lord is Lord of all of life, and that all of life is holy, in Christ Jesus!

Go for it! Enjoy life in the Lord! Work at sharing healthy life styles, beginning with yourself!

Have a Healthy and Hope-filled day in the Lord! —LEJ

Several weeks ago, I greeted Zachary and his dad as we entered the Christopher Center together. The Christopher Center, on the campus of Concordia University River Forest, houses both the College of Education and the on-campus Early Childhood Center. Four-year-old Zachary was on his way to the Early Childhood Center via the “shortcut.” On rainy days, Zachary and his father used the side entrance and stairs to the second floor, then walked to the main staircase to go back down the lobby and the entrance to the Early Childhood Center.

Do You Want to See Jesus?

As we entered the second-floor hallway, Zachary walked – almost ran – toward the floor-to ceiling window that looks down on the lobby below. To my surprise, I heard Dad say, “Do you want to see Jesus?” But as I looked through the window with Zachary, I saw what he saw – the Great Commission batik directly across the lobby from where we were standing.

This multi-panel batik by Del Klaustermeyer hangs above the reception desk. It includes images of the “all the world” of which Jesus speaks. The far-left panel of this display is an image of Jesus’ face proportionally larger than the other images in the display set.

This representation of Jesus is what Zachary was hurrying to see! For him, Jesus was there, looking directly across at him. Also looking down at all the children entering the Center through that lobby. He and his father had developed a routine of taking the “shortcut” and going to “see Jesus.”

Seeing Jesus and Seeing Jesus

As Zachary looked across at the Klaustermeyer batik, I was struck by the relationships of this simple activity to what would be happening in his classroom throughout the day. He would be seeing Jesus as he participated in Jesus Time, as he joined in songs to and about Jesus, as he prayed with his classmates, and as he experienced the love and support of his teachers throughout the day. The opportunity to see Jesus across the lobby had become a prelude to the opportunity to see Jesus throughout the day. His father’s support of that

routine silently witnessed to a parent/teacher partnership in bringing Zachary to see Jesus every day. Zachary's teacher – and all the teachers in the center – would spend intentional and accidental moments throughout the day supporting his quest to see Jesus. What an awesome and important task!

Seeing Jesus in our Centers

Zachary's routine has stimulating my thinking about what happens – and needs to happen – in Lutheran early childhood centers across the country. What is happening, both intentionally and accidentally to help children see Jesus on a daily basis? How do the routines and environments of centers operated in the name of Christian and Lutheran churches across the country? Are we using opportunities or copping out?

My granddaughter attends a Lutheran center called The Shepherd's Flock. In the lobby of this center is a four-foot stature of Jesus cradling a lamb in his arms – a visible and visual interpretation of the Good Shepherd. During the Christmas season, the teachers in this center discuss the comparison between the Baby Jesus in the manger and the Big Jesus in the lobby. What a powerful way to introduce the purpose of Jesus' coming as a baby!

My first awareness of The Shepherd's Flock's use of its name and its lobby environment as a powerful teaching tool was my grandson's visit to our home three Christmases ago. Aidan was three at that time. As he walked into my living room, he immediately walked toward the Lladro statue of an adult Jesus with outstretched arms on the coffee table. "Look, Mom. A big Jesus." Then moving toward a manger display, he continued, "And here's a baby Jesus."

Other centers I have visited have depictions of Jesus and the children in lobbies and/or classrooms. In some cases, these pictures are teaching tools. In others, they are simply decorative objects.

Creating Environments that Teach

What about your center? Your classroom? Do you have images that teach? Do you have symbols of the faith that serves as the foundation for what you do? Do you have representations that silently – but loudly – communicate the Jesus in whose name you serve?

Having intentional environments that communicate the faith is the first step. Using those environments to intentionally teach is also important.

As with Aidan's understanding that the Baby Jesus would become the Big Jesus in order to take away his sins and serve as his lifelong Shepherd, we need children to be taught about their Savior. We need teachers to be intentional about that teaching.

As with Zachary's running to see Jesus, we need children to willingly come to learn about their Savior. We need parents and teachers who lead their children to learn about and come to Jesus, both in the classroom and at home.

From Aidan to Zachary, we need to provide environments and experiences that intentionally lead young children to see Jesus every day in every Christian classroom. —*LEJ*

At one time I liked winter. As an elementary student, my paper route was 2 miles long from end to end. When there was snow on the ground and I was unable to use my bicycle, my mother would drive me to the far end of my route and I would deliver papers from my sled as I walked back to my house. I actually enjoyed that task and the walk through the snow. If someone were to ask me to do that today, I would need to think hard and long on the matter. Somehow when we get older, winter loses some of its mystery and excitement. Now when it snows I almost have to force myself to go out to find the snow shovel to clean the walks.

So why am I thinking about winter? The changing seasons, in particular the change from winter to spring helps remind me of the important cycles in our lives as Christians. Winter is dark, cold, and threatening just as our lives would be without Christ and His Salvation. We would not wish to live in such a world for very long. We need to escape from the cold and threatening circumstances and enter into spring. We long for spring. Once confronted with our sin we long for salvation.

The season of spring brings us warmth, new life, and additional sunshine. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ bring that same new life to us as people of God. We celebrate the arrival of spring not just because the days get longer and warmer but because it reminds us of the new life we have in Christ especially as we celebrate His resurrection on the "first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox". The change of winter into spring is a rebirth for the earth just as our change from sinful people to redeemed people is the rebirth we have in Christ.

As you celebrate spring this year by attending Easter services planting bulbs, cutting grass, taking walks, or just sitting on the porch be reminded of the great love God had for us as he sent his Son to give us a spring and remove us from the winter of our sin.

Happy Easter, Happy Spring! —LEJ

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Lutheran Education intends to publish the best research and reflection on a wide range of topics relevant to Lutheran Christian education. The journal welcomes manuscripts addressing Lutheran education at all levels from early childhood to higher education, in the classroom or in the parish. First consideration is given to well documented articles which may provide theological context on Lutheran education, explore issues specific to Lutheran education, or which either present for the first time or discuss the implications of recent educational developments for Lutheran education.

1. Format for Submission: The preferred format in which to receive manuscripts is in Microsoft Word via documents attached to an email. Please limit formatting as much as possible (specifically multiple fonts, type sizes, headers/footers, boldface, etc.) as these must be removed and/or changed when creating copy for the printer. Second preference would be documents submitted on a 3.5 inch floppy disk or on CD-Rom.

2. Length: Manuscripts may range from approximately 2000-5000 words. The editors reserve the right to request modifications.

3. Style and Documentation: Style and documentation in the journal are governed by the most recent edition of *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*; *Webster's New International Dictionary* is consulted in matters of spelling.

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